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NOLL *and* *the* FAIRIES



By Hervey White

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NOLL AND THE FAIRIES



"ON SHE FLEW INTO THE BARN-YARD."

Noll *and the* Fairies

BY

HERVEY WHITE

ILLUSTRATED BY

ELIZABETH KRYSHER



Herbert S. Stone *and Company*
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Noll *and the* Fairies

I

ONCE upon a time, long ago, in a wide, green, far-away country, where all the raindrops are pearls and the dewdrops most beautiful diamonds, there was born in the end of a rainbow a tiny little brown baby, blinking his big eyes like a bat and screaming at the top of his voice.

The nurse, who pretended to know

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everything, said he cried because he was cold, and straightway she put him into warm water and made ready with flannels and bandages. The doctor, who knew so much that he never said anything whatever, walked away with the father to take a drink. And the mother, who knew nothing at all, but just smiled and smiled, she was so happy, lay looking out of the window wondering why the world was so rosy, for she didn't even know of the rainbow, though its light was in her eyes and on her mouth. The schoolmaster, who was not there, but who knew more than anyone for all that, said he knew the reason the baby was crying, but he wouldn't tell for six years, and then only to the baby himself. It was wonderful how the schoolmaster could keep talking and never tell anything

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at all, but that is one of the secrets of learning and doesn't concern you or me.

Well, the baby grew and grew, and was called Noll; that was because his head was so round. His nose stuck out like a hazelnut, and what little hair there was on him was a sort of hazelnut brown. He stared with his big bubble eyes and screwed up his face and grunted, and what he liked best of all was to feed at his mother's breast. And what he liked next best, I guess, was to sleep, and be let alone, and not have the nurse bundling at him, and children poking him with fingers, and screaming "peek" in his face. Well, so he grew and grew, just a little all the time, till the day of his christening came, and all the people were rejoicing. Now it was at the supper after the

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christening that the schoolmaster got to drinking more than usual—he was always drinking more than usual—and it was while he was drinking more than usual that he up and told the father his secret that he wasn't to tell for six years. The father listened attentively, as one should when the schoolmaster talks, and though the secret wasn't really true, not at all what actually happened, it makes little difference to us, for it brings us to the beginning of our story.

You see the fairies, at the birth, were quarreling over the baby, partly because fairies are always quarreling—the good ones quarreling with the bad—and partly because this baby was born in the end of a rainbow, which doesn't happen very often, and is a matter of great importance when it

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does. For, to be born in the end of a rainbow—I hope you are listening very carefully—to be born in the end of a rainbow is to be born a true child of Heaven, living for God's truth and His beauty, and trying to make them known here on earth. Some call these Heaven children poets, and some call them artists or singers, but I have heard of one who was a carpenter, and once, in a great crowded city, I thought I saw a vague memory of rainbow in the faded sick eyes of a child. Wherever they may be in the world they are very far apart and very lonely, for no one recognizes them as Heaven children; only the fairies know them in a minute, for they see where the rainbow comes down; but mortal men do not see it at all, although they insist they do often; the trouble is that

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mortals are not perfect, and the light is ever shifting in their eyes.

Well, the real struggle of the fairies was between a princess and a gnome; the others had all taken sides with these, and were talking like katydids and grasshoppers. The princess had the baby by the head, and the gnome was clutching him around the heart, each pulling in opposite directions. No wonder the poor baby cried.

The princess was very, very beautiful, and very gorgeously dressed—white satin and diamonds and pearls, not pearls of raindrops and diamonds of dew, but real ones, hard and high polished, as hard as the princess's heart. She had her cold hands clutched on his head, and all her retinue was behind trying to get hold to help, but the gnome's warm hands

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were so big that they covered the baby all up, so the courtiers could not get hold, and the princess had to pull all alone.

The gnome was a curious looking fellow. Any boy would hoot him in the streets. He had shaggy hair on his legs and looked more like a goat than a man; only there was a kindness in his face, but boys on the street don't see that.

Well, the princess pulled, and the gnome pulled. And the nurse thought the baby was cold. The gnome had the best hold of course; besides, he was strongest though misshapen. But just when the princess let go she gave the baby's head a little twist, and for that reason it could never see quite straight, but would always turn toward the princess and her people. But the

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good gnome caught him to his breast and from that time the baby did not cry any more, and the nurse thought it was the warm water that did it, and went on pretending more than ever. Now this is not what the schoolmaster told when he was drinking at the christening; but all the same it is the beginning of my story.





II

LITTLE NOLL continued to grow, 'terded by the gnome and his people. It is wonderful what fairies can do for babies when humans nearly wear the life out of them. Sometimes when Noll's sister Jane was trotting him violently on her knee—she did it just to amuse him, but he felt like a jelly-fish on horseback—sometimes when his eyes were getting glassy and his brains going addled

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inside, and as for his poor little chin it was clapping like an old-fashioned knocker, why then the fairies would come in and straight off set to his rescue. One of them would turn into a fly and bite through a hole in Jane's stocking, and while she was scratching her heel the others would get after a mouse in the wall and frighten it from its hole into the kitchen. Then the cook would get into a chair and scream for Jane to bring the cat, and Jane would lay Noll on the bed and give his brains time to grow together again, while the cat was waked up from her cushion and thrown like a bean-bag at the mouse. The fairies entered into the fun, for they knew little Noll was all right. They stood before all the mouse holes and shouted to keep little Dor from running in. They beat their

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tiny caps on the cat's eyelids and made her sleepier than ever. One of them tickled the cook on the ear, and of course she thought it was the mouse, though there it was running before her, and made her leap for the table and upset a big pan of batter. Then the cat stopped to lick up the batter and the mouse ran into a hole. The cook got down to cuff the cat's ears and sister Jane went off to play for fear her ears would come after the cat's. Meanwhile, Noll could have a long rest. He lay there thinking his own thoughts and wondering what would come next.

Life was a strange thing to him in those days; stranger than to you or to me, though goodness knows I find it strange enough, and I am four and thirty years old. With Noll it was

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mostly feeling at first; he couldn't see nor hear very well. Still, he may have been thankful for that. Things came and pressed on his sides; warm things with more pressure at the ends. Some of them were soft and tender, and some of them were firm and tender, too; but often they were not tender at all, but inquisitive and fussy and wriggling. Even when there are only hands in the world there are a great many disagreeable kinds of hands. Then there were hands inside that he felt, or that's what he thought they were then. Some of them clutched in his stomach, and he had to call on them to stop. When he called long enough, and loud enough, the soft tender hands came on his outside and put his face against his mother's soft breast. Then the clutching hands

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inside stopped and he felt as happy as toast.

After a while he began to see and to hear, but he couldn't tell one from the other. He didn't know ears from eyes. Everything seemed inside to him. His brother Henry would beg to hold the baby, and then all sorts of things began to happen: screams of light! and flashes of sound! Something big and white had been before him, now it was in square spots and hurt. "Bow, wow, wow!" it went through him, lasting for ten minutes of uproar.

"Henry, don't hold the baby to the window, the strong light is bad for its eyes. Don't try to talk to it yet, just sit down and hold it gently and still."

But what boy was ever gentle or still? In time Noll got back to his mother, battered from within and without.

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Sometimes he screamed and kicked wildly. It seemed to deaden the shocks.

Little at a time things got righted. He found that the world didn't really slide over him, but that he was lifted about. Noises became different from lights. He believed he liked noises the least: they made such a babble and thumping. Then there came an *up* and a *down* to him. He was certain he should always like *up* the best. *Down* put such a lump in his throat. But better even than *up* he liked his mother, there was such a soft cooing about her.

One day he made a grand discovery. No less than his own feet were his!

It wasn't that he had thought they were somebody else's, for he knew his own kicking was in them, he could feel

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them going up and down. But the curious part of it all was that he had never connected the kicking with the arm waving. One day the nurse left him hastily without a single thing on. She had been giving him a warm cool slide through some wind that got into his mouth, and made him splutter. Then she left him on the bed for a moment and went off to look for a bandage. He had never felt so manly before. He waved arms and kicked legs to express it. Then, some way, the arms and legs came together and began to strike up an acquaintance. He didn't realize that they were his arms and legs for a time. The greatness of the discovery had not dawned on him. But, finally, he got firm hold of one foot and brought it to his mouth to test it farther. It had much the

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same taste as his fist; warm and soft, a good deal like kisses. And then as he was chewing on it gently, all at once the discovery flashed upon him. There was a curious tickle, all his, that ran around from his foot to his head. He had here his first concept of the circle, which is one of the elements of philosophy.

He chewed and kicked, he was so happy. But just as he was realizing that he was kicking with only one leg, and just as he was making desperate effort to make the kicking and arm waving that were not already in his mouth acquainted with each other like the rest, then who should come floating through space but his very dear, cooing mother.

"Why, nurse, you have left him quite naked!" she cried, reproachfully.

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"Why, look! He is blushing for shame." She took him up in her apron and began whirling space all around him. The bed flew up and away, and the disagreeable windows jumped at him. Sister Jane was sitting slanting on the wall, and up was all mixed with down and the sides. However, he was now used to that, and did not even cry out. What hurt him the most really was the thought that he might never be able to discover whether the second leg was his, like the first. And what hurt him next most was the thought that his dear mother had told an untruth. She had said he was ashamed of his nakedness. And he hadn't been ashamed of it at all, but on the contrary, had felt proud and manly.

The first lessons of life are often sad ones, when we learn of the falsehood

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of the world. Noll was serious for several days afterward, and the wise nurse, pretending as ever, said in nurse-like superior fashion, that the baby had taken a cold. Then she blamed it on to sister Jane, who disobediently sat playing with her doll when told three times to run for a bandage.





III

NOLL had another sister, Catharine, who bobbed up and down and said "boo" even faster than his sister Jane. For a long time he thought they were both one, but gradually he reasoned two out of them. Catharine was always eating something. Her very kisses tasted of bread and gooseberry jam. She often put a morsel into his mouth, but it got under his tongue in little rough spots, and

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made him cough till he was dizzy. Then Catharine would trot him and pound him, till he concluded she was Jane after all.

There were also two cats and three dogs in the family. He liked these better than his brother and sisters, but that was to be expected, of course, for they understood his language, never bothered by asking questions, and were always soft and warm for him to grab.

His language was one of his serious problems. He often thought of it for hours without ever saying a word, and that is serious thinking indeed. Many conclusions came from the dogs and the cats. Their language was simple and sufficient, though from time to time he thought of an improvement. Now it is one of the conceits of grown

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people that they teach their language to babies; but this is not true at all. Babies make their own language, beginning with the very first principles, and developing it as they have need. The reason that it turns out King's English in the end is that all babies are born English babies, except those that are born in other countries, and naturally they must invent English, so everything turns out as it should, and the grown-ups have nothing to do with it. This is something the way it begins with the help of the animals and chickens:

"Ma! Ma! Ma!" naturally comes first. That was introduced by the lamb, and means "I think I want my mother, and nobody else will quite do." If the mother comes, and most mothers do, that is language enough for one

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day. The great trouble with grown people is that they are always talking too much. If, however, for some unexplainable reason, mother does not come when she should, why, then we have the cat for an example, and call out "Nyah!" till she does come, making it very loud and very long. The dog furnishes a third part of language, which may mean a good many things. "Bow! wow! wow!" it goes on indefinitely according to the humor of the speaker. Sometimes it means "I'm a sad dog," and sometimes "You're a dog in the manger," but usually it means "Oh, don't bother me, I'm enjoying life in dog fashion, and holding conversation with the moon." There are other words from the chickens, such as "Tchk," or "Tickle me if you want to see me laugh," and "Quack" for "Don't

be so foolish," but this properly belongs to the study of philology, and you will get plenty of that when you come to go to college, though they do have a queer way of teaching it.

Along with the process of talking came the process of sitting up. That, too, is a great improvement, for it gives a new aspect to the world. A baby gets dreadfully tired of the ceiling, and the few flies that crawl about on it. He is even glad to have sister Jane floating over, like a cloud, if she would only be content to float, and not insist on digging along with it. But in sitting up one sees all sorts of things. The cats and the dogs take new interest, and even the cook is endurable. Then one learns that other people go on all the time, instead of being made new on each floating occasion. They

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go in and out of holes in the world, but they sometimes stay made outside, though it is doubtful whether they do much out there, except, sometimes, to drum on the windows or shout unintelligibly to one another. Noll often wished that his mother had not contracted the bad habit of staying long hours on the outside. He waited and waited for her to appear, but in time he took notice of his sister Jane who sat in a chair with her sewing.

One day, having nothing to do and feeling strong in the back, he composed a poem to his sister, and thought it hummingly to himself. This is the first time it has ever been printed, and will be a great surprise to the scholars, for no one ever knew it had been thought.

Here it is:

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Oh, sister Jane! Oh, sister Jane!

Oh, why do you sit and sew?

It gives me softening of the brain.

The cat is in trouble; the dog is in pain,

I think from the weather 'tis going to

rain,

And ever you sit and sew!

If I had my dinner, I'd eat it again,

For time is so stupidly slow,

Slow—O—O—slow,

Time is so stupidly slow.

Oh, Jane, my dear, oh, Jane, my dear,

Turn over and sit on your head.

'Twill take the stiffening out of your

ear,

The sewing will suffer a little, I fear,

No doubt the beginning will seem a bit

queer,

But blue is no queerer than red.

I'm tired of sitting and seeing you here,

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Turn over and sit on your head.

Red—head—head—red,
Blue is no queerer than red.

We gather from this early effort that the young genius was already growing restless at times, and longing for change and variety. It is one of the first evidences of the poet.





IV

THE fairies had all gone off on a six months' celebration in the forest, and Noll wondered and wondered where they were, and why they didn't come and give him ideas. It is a trick that fairies have sometimes with poets, of leaving them in the lurch when most needed, and never so much as making an apology, or saying a good-by at parting. Noll wanted to look for them mightily, his legs fairly itched with impatience.

One day, when he was watching the

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fire, he thought he saw some fairies in the flames rising and flying up the black chimney. Oh, if he could get there to grab one! But sister Jane, as stupid as usual, had set him down far out of reach; he was on the floor, to be sure, but a long way from the fleeting flame-fairies. Jane went out into the yard to help the cook catch a chicken, and that made the itching in his legs all the stronger. If he only could get over to those fairies before they all went up in smoke!

One leg hitched—which is just the same as itched down in London—one leg hitched forward in its eagerness, and then the other hitched after it a little. Why he was actually moving! The flame-fairies were getting nearer and nearer! Yes, he could hear them laughing and whistling, and the flap of

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their wings crackled like paper. He liked the warm haze that they played in. He would grab them and hold them in his arms. It would be such fun to feel them struggle, trying to fly up the black chimney. Hitch, hitch, went the nervous legs excitedly. Baby was stretching out his arms.

Just then a curious thing happened way off in the deep shady woods, where the fairies were sitting at their banquet.

"I feel uneasy and warm," said the gnome mother, who was Noll's special care-taker.

"How do you feel?" asked the others.

"Something scorching hot on my face," said the woman.

"It's the wind from the desert," said one.

"It's a sun-ray that's got through the leaves," said another.

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"It's the steam of this royal hot pudding," said a third.

"It's the curse of the princess," said a fourth.

"I guess it's Noll at the fire," said the old woman, after her thinking, and quick she leaped on to her broomstick and flew away leaving them eating.

Sure enough, as she went in the kitchen door there was Noll close to the hearth, his face shining red in the light and the flames reflected in his eyes. In a minute he would be blazing, and not a soul left in the house. Father and mother in the churchyard, and cook and Jane chasing a chicken. Oh, what was the world coming to? And the fire-imps crowing and clapping.

The old woman seized on Noll's skirts and doubled them tight around his legs, arranging them so that every

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hitch he took would tend to pull him over backward. This was the best she could do, for already he was much stronger than she was. She knew it would hold him for a time, and give her a chance to get help. Out she flew into the barnyard, where cook was holding up her petticoats and making long steps after the chicken. Sister Jane was watching at the gate, in case the chicken should fly over. How slow they were to be sure! Cook's shoes were too heavy to move fast, and even when the chicken should be caught they might stop to kill it, or get breath before going back to the kitchen.

Now what did the old woman do, who had to think all in a second? Just this: she rode her broomstick up to the chicken and leaped off and astride the chicken's neck. Then, using the

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broomstick for a bit, she thrust it into the panting chicken's mouth and reined it right into the kitchen, where it hid under a bench by the hearth, close to Noll, who was tugging at his skirts, and all the time looking at the fire.

"However did he get there?" gasped the cook, grabbing him up in an instant. "Why, he would have burned his precious little hands. Jane, Jane, run and call your mother. Tell her the baby can creep, and almost crept into the fire."

"What a disagreeable cook," thought Noll in the midst of his screaming. "I'll not eat her sugar when she asks me."

Back in the dim, dark forest the gnome mother was sitting at the table, quite in her place as before.

"Was it the wind from the desert?" asked the first.

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"Or a sun-ray that got through the leaves?" said the second.

"Or the steam of this royal hot pudding?" said the third.

"Or the curse of the princess?" said the fourth.

"It was Noll and the fire, as I said," replied the gnome mother, curtly. "Keep still and don't chatter, I tell you. And, Mumu, pass me more bee-bread. You know I can't eat these crusts."





V

IT WAS a triumphant day for Noll when he took his first steps of free walk. His mother thought the greatest day of his life was when he cut the first tooth, but that didn't interest him. If anything he would rather the tooth had stayed where it was, for it tempted him to bite when at supper, and his mother always spanked him for that. "What was a tooth for," he questioned inwardly, "if not to bite

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with when at supper? Grown people always bite at their supper. Even sister Catharine is allowed to bite at her bread and gooseberry jam. But when I bite, just a little, and that only with one tooth, to try it—why, Catharine has a dozen teeth if she has one, and she bites with them all in a row, taking a horseshoe piece of bread every time, and licking more jam on to it than belongs before her teeth set down on it. Grown people are so unreasonable anyhow, always spanking and saying, 'No, no! Mamma whip! Noll naughty boy!' " At times he would brood over his wrongs till there was danger of chronic melancholy setting in, which is a disease very much like the measles when they stubbornly refuse to come out. In the end he found satisfaction in inventing an imaginary world, and

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pretending that his parents lived in it, together with cook and all the neighbors.

He pictured this world of the grown-ups much as the real world was to him. Their table he set on high trees, far up over their heads. He just let one corner of the table-cloth hang down, where they might seize it and pull, bringing down showers of nice goodies, enough for the dogs and the cats. But every time that his father looked at the table-cloth corner a little wistfully he, Noll, would say in a voice rolling like thunder, "No, no! Noll spank! Papa naughty!" and then his father would have to sit down. In this, his imaginary world for the grown folk, everything was enormously too large. He made their bed as big as the smoke-house, and so arranged that when they

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tried to get into it, it would come keeling over on rockers, and tumble them down on their backs, striking its roof on their noses. He had the windows high up, so they couldn't see out; and as for the mantel shelf and clock, he put them so far up they couldn't even see them, though he covered them with all sorts of pretty things, and made the clock go tick-a-tick, tick, with a bell for each quarter of an hour, and a marvelous mystery of winding which he attended to all himself, in a way that they couldn't see at all. Then, sometimes, he, the baby, would come in and pick up the cook or his mother or some of the neighbors, and toss them up high toward the ceiling to see whether they would look scared or would laugh. And in case they got used to it and tried to see what was on

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the mantel, then he would toss them so fast they couldn't see anything; and only would he hold them still before it, when, perhaps sometimes, they were crying and their eyes were so full of tears they couldn't see, when he would say playfully to them, "Here, look at this pretty white lamb. See the pewter mug with the King on the handle. Hear the clock tick-a-tick, tick." And just when they stopped crying and began to look he would set them down on the floor, and give them a clothes-pin. A hateful old clothes-pin that they had seen thousands of times before, and even tasted till the taste was all off of it. Then when he wished for the greatest of torments he took them to the mystery of the parlor, a place where they couldn't touch anything, or even sit on the floor, and there he

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would hold them up before a little misty window, where a little baby lived all the time—the cunningest little brown fellow, he had never seen anything like him—and this little baby in the misty window would kick and hold out his hands, the fingers all spread ready to grab on, and he would stick out his eyes and open his mouth and wiggle all over, he was so happy, and then when the grown folks wanted to just touch the baby's little soft fingers, he wouldn't open the window, though the weather was summer outside. No, he'd only let them rub on the glass where the little baby rubbed on the other side. And finally the little baby in the window would want to get them, so he would wrinkle up his face to cry pitifully, but he, Noll, wouldn't open the window for those grown-ups; no,

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not for a thousand of worlds. No, they might scream and kick as much as they liked, but he would laugh at them as if it were a joke. In this way he amused himself at times when his melancholy was near overpowering.

As we were saying, it was a great day for him when he took up an interest in walking. It helped him to forget other troubles. It kept his thoughts in his legs. Of course he could stand at a chair, or holding on to the bedpost. Any intelligent baby can do that if he only has confidence in his knees. Oh, yes; he had been standing for weeks, standing at the chair and at the bedpost. But how to stand from one to the other—there was the problem of a lifetime. It was not that he had not thought it out, so far as head work is

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concerned; all that he had done long ago, the process was simple and easy. He had divided it into ten different stages, which arranged themselves something as follows:

First stage: Let go the chair with one hand.

Second stage: Let go the chair with the other hand.

Third stage: Let go the chair with both hands. This was something dreadful to think of!

Fourth stage: Draw a long breath.

Fifth stage: Don't put a hand on the chair.

Sixth stage: Count three slowly.

Seventh stage: Put out one foot toward the bed.

Eighth stage: Spread the arms gently, but ready to grab on to the chair.

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Ninth stage: Put out another foot toward the bedpost.

Tenth stage: Forget all about the chair and go.

Yes, the method of his reasoning was good, but he could never get beyond the third stage. That place he stuck every time. He could let go the chair with one hand. Then let go the chair with the other hand. But when it came to letting go the chair with both hands—it made his heart thump to think of it. In the end he always sat down and hitched his way over to the bedpost. It was a dear old bedpost, and he loved it. Loved it 'most as much as the chair, it stood so steady and firm. Still, the chair had the advantage of shoving. If he could only get back to the chair! If he could only *walk* back to

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the chair! He began his reasoning again:

First stage: Let go the chair—no, the bedpost—with one hand.

Second stage: Let go the bedpost with the other hand. Gracious! he forgot to grab back quickly with the one hand, and found himself standing alone! He had to sit down on the floor just to think of it. And then—he *hitched* over to the chair.

It was his brother Henry who did it. He would never have suspected it of brother Henry. He had always trusted brother Henry. Now he could never love him quite the same any more; not even when they were old men together. He tried to think how it would be with a different brother Henry who was ready to betray him at the most critical moment. He had got used to the other

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one, and he didn't like to change. It came about in this way, though he was ashamed to think of it for years afterward—to think that his triumph should be a disgrace, and all on account of brother Henry. You see, he had got, after several days' practice, he had got past the third stage of walking. He was able to let go with both hands. Well, one day he was standing by the chair, looking toward the bedpost as usual, he had even drawn a long breath, he had not put back either hand, he was preparing to count three very softly, so as not to flutter his legs,—when brother Henry slipped up behind him and slyly took the chair quite away. Noll looked back at the noise, saw the chair gone, *walked* right over to the bedpost and sat down and cried like a baby. He had walked.

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His triumph was accomplished. But walked because he couldn't help it. Tricked into it by dear brother Henry. Brother Henry who had broken his heart.





VI

THE fairies were certainly a comfort to him when everyone else had turned traitor. They came back from their feast in the forest after stuffing themselves for a fortnight, and though they were a bit stupid from overeating and the gnome mother had five different kinds of indigestion, still

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they were useful to him, and he was thankful to have them around him.

It was about this time in his history that his mother and some of the women, her neighbors, constructed an instrument of torture that they chose to apply every Sunday, probably to teach him patience and endurance, though it may have been for some other reason. The matter was never explained to him clearly, in fact they did not offer him the slightest explanation. The instrument was stiff and gleaming white, and in shape not unlike his flannel jackets and dresses. There were two sleeves for his hands to go in, and little teeth in them to chew on his wrists. Then a saw-collar was buttoned around his throat so tight he could hardly turn his head. The collar was perforated like a colan-

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der, and pointed with a hundred little spikes like fences that small boys have to climb over, only this fence was turned bottom side up. Below the collar and the sleeves the instrument went on down for some distance. There must have been more perforations at the bottom from the winds that got in to his legs. He could never look down to see what was really there, for the saw-collar caught him below the ears and dug and scratched like the kitten if he even so much as rolled his eyes.

There was something connected with religion about this instrument of torture. He got his first hint of it from listening to his father once reading about such things in the history of the Spanish inquisition. He knew, too, that it had to do with religion because it was always applied to him on Sun-

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days. He thought for a time it made him into an idol, which is something of wood, and very stiff, and probably has been made so by saw-collars worn for many years of Sundays. What made him think more he was an idol was that the women all began to worship as soon as the instrument was on him. They knelt down before him and kissed him somewhere, the saw-collar not letting him see where, and they said "too sweet!" and "too cunning!" and everything beginning with "too." Then they invariably asked for his age, something that hadn't the slightest interest for him, and after they had tickled his feet, an attention that he always resented, they went away and left him to keep on becoming an idol, growing more and more wooden every Sunday, stiffer, and stiffer, and stiffer.

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It was several Sundays before he learned his mistake, and concluded he was not an idol at all. It came about from hearing his father reading again. His father used to read every Sunday in a loud bellowing voice that made him sleepy. Still, he knew he should pay attention, as we all should, you know, when father reads. Noll always wanted to improve his mind from the first; besides, the saw-collar kept him awake. Well, his father was reading one Sunday, and he said those who worshiped idols were heathens. Now Noll knew his mother was no heathen, for a heathen is what the cat is when he steals the liver out of the pantry, and the cook runs after him to get it back. "Tom, you heathen!" screams the cook, and then Tom drops the liver he is dragging and hurries into the

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orchard, no doubt to worship some idol, though Noll had not thought of it before. Anyway, his mother never stole liver from the pantry and, therefore, she was no heathen, and as only heathens worship idols, he could not be an idol. It took him a long time to think this out, but he had to keep thinking at something. It was the only thing he could do on Sundays that the collar couldn't catch him at and stop him. You see even saw-collars have their advantages, though it is said they overtax the brain. Certain it is that when applied to grown people continuously the victim is quite senseless in the end, and unable to think to take them off.

Well, now you know all about the saw-collar, it is time for the fairies to come in. Noll wanted them to come

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in long before they did, but they were stuffing themselves with seed-cakes in the forest. Early one Sunday morning they held a long council on the tea-kettle, that cook had left standing by the hearth. The gnome mother presided on the spout, and the little gnomes sat reflectively on the handle.

Said the gnome mother, with her hand over her stomach, as if expecting a new symptom any minute, "Gnome people, how can we help Noll and free him from this instrument of torture? This is really a trap of the princess. She will catch him and hold him in it conscious, till he is vain with thinking of himself, till he will listen to the whisperings of her people. I fear harm has already been done, for poets are susceptible to vanity."

The gnomes sat thinking in silence,

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not so much as saying one word. They winked five times all together, and wondered what they could say.

At length one old gnome rose up and smoothed out the crick in his back. He was dressed in an armor of rubies, and wore a green cap on his head. "Most worshipful gnome mother," he began, "this is a matter of great seriousness before us." He stopped here to let all be impressed. He had hoped that when he had said this he would think of something else to say, but not a thing entered his head. So he began again: "Most excellent and worshipful gnome mother (applause from all the gnomes), this is a matter of grave seriousness before us."

"Hear, hear, hear!" exclaimed the listeners in chorus; but there wasn't anything to hear, for the crick came

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again in the gnome's back, and he began groaning and gasping and grunting, and all the little gnomes gathered about, though they suspected why the crick had come, but they offered him advice and consolation as if he really had a speech in his head. One of them told him to drink an elder-flower of tea every morning, and another said he had too much bone-set. The gnome mother was very much interested because his symptoms were precisely like her third stage of indigestion, and she was this moment passing through the sixth. In the end, the crick was let alone and the old gnome was placed on the knob in the middle of the cover of the teakettle and elected vice-president of the meeting because of his powerful speech. Then the gnome mother called the council to

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order, and said that each member should speak now in turn, offering the first suggestion that popped into his head, and limiting his speech, every one, to one ten-thousandth of a second. She held her stop-watch in her hand and called on each gnome-imp by name. The secretary's report was like this:

Gnome Mother.—"Buttons!"

Buttons.—"Saw off Noll's head with the collar and his mother will saw the collar off."

Gnome Mother. — "Too violent! Skweege!"

Skweege.—"Turn the apron bottom side up. Button the collar tight around Noll's ankles, and fill the whole thing up with bran."

Gnome Mother.—"A valuable suggestion. The bran would deaden the

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shock. But why not use oatmeal instead of bran, as oatmeal is said to be healing? Prinks!"

Prinks.—"I have written a poem for the occasion."

Gnome Mother.—"Read it."

Prinks reads:

A flea had borrowed a blunderbuss

To shoot at a toy balloon

Too soon! Too soon!

The farmer he aimed from made such
a fuss

With scratching and telling his abacus,

The flea got his legs tied up in a muss

And blackened an eye of the moon.

The bullfinch swallowed the blunder-
buss

And fainted away in a swoon,

Prune, loon, spoon, noon,

And all of the rhymes for swoon.

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"Let the secretary record the poem in the seconds," said gnome mother, "for minutes are too long to write in the fairy world."

"Hear! hear! hear!" screamed all the gnomes, rattling their feet. They forgot that they had heard already.

"Silence," called out the gnome mother.

"Mumu is pinching me," cried Skweege.

"He applauded on my foot," replied Mumu.

"A quarrel! a quarrel!" screamed all, dancing and throwing up their caps.

Just then the cook came along and picked up the teakettle to fill it, tumbling them all on to the floor in a little pile of flying arms and legs.

Gnome mother flew away disgusted, leaving them all in charge of Ruby.

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She sat down on the pendulum of the clock, which was the best she could do for a rocking chair. "Whatever am I to do about Noll?" she kept saying over and over. "Those gnome-imps are all so unpractical."

A wasp came along by the pendulum, flying with his mouth full of mud. He was building his house in the clock, and mud was his building material.

"Stop a minute," called gnome mother, imperatively, holding up one hand of her stop-watch.

The wasp took the mud from his mouth and tucked it under his left wing. Then he drew an extra stinger from his pocket—he always kept one handy for repairs—and began picking the sand from his teeth.

"At your service," he bowed with a flourish, waving his disengaged wing.

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"Fly over and light on the cook's thumb, the one on the handle of the teakettle," commanded gnome mother. "But mind and no foolishness of stinging."

Now the cook was filling the teakettle with water at the water pail, and directly under her elbow and hanging over the back of a chair was Noll's best Sunday white dress, freshly starched and ironed for that morning.

"Och! A wasp! A wasp!" screamed the cook, dropping the teakettle and upsetting the chair. "Och, Mary! I thought I was stung!" and she ran away into the pantry and hid herself in a corner behind the flour-barrel.

Meanwhile the teakettle being left to its own devices and being quite too full to be sober, had gone off on a ter-

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rible spree, rolling and hiccoughing like the schoolmaster after a day at the fair. It staggered about tipsily on the sink, and finally tumbled off the edge lurching to the floor with a crash, where it struck square on the white dress from the chairback that had only arrived there that minute, planting its black feet on the front and rolling helplessly all over. Then, as if this were not bad enough, and no doubt made to feel very sick from falling such a terrible distance, it threw up great mouthfuls of water all over the prickly saw-collar making it as limp as a string. When mother came running into the kitchen there was the white dress quite ruined. Noll wore no saw-collar that week. In fact its teeth were never so sharp from that time. Its spirit was evidently broken from being

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found in such low company as the tea-kettle.

"Thank you!" said the gnome mother, graciously, as the wasp flew back with his mud.





VII

IT IS a sad time in life when we are forced to give up that to which we have long been accustomed. Noll had been accustomed to a special and private feeding place for something over a year, in fact throughout his whole lifetime; and then, without a word of warning, he was suddenly told to give it up. He crawled behind the door to think it over. Something had got to be done.

It probably all came about from his

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having used his new teeth so freely. He knew it was risky when he did it, but new teeth are such interesting utensils. Just now, when the punishment was on him, he would willingly have pulled the teeth out. Indeed he did pull on one softly, but it stuck fast and wouldn't budge an inch. Sister Catharine came along and offered him some bread and gooseberry jam, but he felt so insulted at the substitute that when she held it up to his mouth to bite, he bit into her hand instead and off she went screaming to mother, mixing her tears with her jam. No matter, Catharine shouldn't bother him, especially when he was thinking. His stomach felt as savage as his teeth. They gave him such mixtures to put in it. No wonder it kept chewing and biting.

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Grown people have a queer way of eating. It's curious how pleased they are with it. For example, if they want to eat milk they put a hard cold ridge into the mouth and let the milk spill gradually out over. There is nothing at all to guide the milk in, and plenty to make it run out. Most of it gathers on the chin and trickles down the outside of the neck. Always by the time it has got to the end of the neck it is chilly and soppy and wet. Then the upper side of the hard ridge strikes on the bridge of the nose, and makes one cough up the few drops he has swallowed. Altogether it is a disagreeable process, though one isn't satisfied without it.

Noll thought it all over carefully and finally made up his mind. The trouble was he had been too good-natured.

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From this on he would always be firm. He took a solemn vow, there behind the door, that not a morsel or drop should pass his lips unless it came in the proper way. Something soft and sticky was in his hand as he clenched it in making the vow. He looked to see what it was, and found it was a wad of Catharine's bread and jam mixed. He ate it down heartily at once. It would give him strength to keep his vow. Then he came out from behind the door and sat about waiting for battle.

Cook began it, as usual. "Jane, it's time Noll had his milk. Run and get the mug from the hearth."

Jane brought the mug as she was bid, and began that artificial smiling that people use when they want to fool babies. "Noll hungry?" she said

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sweet as sugar. "Nice milk — warm, warm."

Noll put his hands tight behind him. He took no interest in the affair.

Jane held the mug up toward his mouth.

In reply to this he turned his head square around so quick, so quick it made his neck snap, and sister Jane, instead of putting the mug to his mouth as she intended, was holding it to the back of his ear.

Then he wagged his head back and forth as hard and fast as he could. That meant, "No; go away."

"Let him take it in his own hands," suggested cook, who was always standing about when she shouldn't.

Jane put the mug in his hands, and no sooner was it felt in his grasp than it seemed to turn into a weapon, and

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he hurled it milk and all across the room, though the milk didn't go so far as the mug. Sister Jane went off for a towel, and cook for a mop and some water. His vow was working out finely. Then his mother came in and took him up in her arms.

Now his mother was the one person in the world who knew how to feed him properly, and he thought that he had her convinced. But when he stretched out his arms and tried to tear her hateful old dress, she took away his hands and held them fast, and even held him far away from her, so he couldn't bunt with his head. He could kick with his feet, however, and he set to work lively with them. Then when his mother held his legs, his teeth were free to get at her hand and he bit her as hard as he could. While he was

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revolving like a windmill and screaming to increase the confusion, who should come in but his father—his father who was so grave and so stern.

“What is the matter?” said his father. And he decided to listen to what else his father should say.

His mother began explaining the trouble, and he pitied himself so much at hearing the story that he began to weep in good earnest.

“Silence!” commanded the father.

Noll silenced to listen for a moment, and then remembering his vow, began again.

“Jane, bring me a cup of milk,” said the father.

“There is no more warm,” said the cook.

“Cold, then,” said the father, not

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relenting. His voice was as cold as the milk.

Noll tried to listen and cry too, though the crying was sometimes forgotten.

"Now, I'll show you how to teach a baby to drink," said the father, talking like the schoolmaster in school with cook and Jane and mother for children. He picked Noll up very formally and planted him securely on his knee. Then he held the mug to his mouth.

Noll naturally didn't like being used as apparatus for his father to illustrate a lecture. He set his teeth and muttered inside. He would never open his mouth.

But father pried it open with his finger. Teeth wouldn't bite into his finger. It was altogether too hard and

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too tough. The jaws did open cautiously for trial but on opening, the finger slipped in, turning and catching like a fishhook fast in his poor little gills.

But if father would play at being fisherman Noll would have advantage of being fish. He flopped from the middle of his back, striking with both feet in tail fashion, a blow that caught father on the windpipe just behind where his whiskers hung down. There was time for but one flop, however, for a great hand came down on his breast, pinning him flat with its force. Then the cup poured milk into his mouth, gurgling, filling up, and flowing over; it was much in the manner of brother Henry when he drowns out a gopher from a hole. Only in this case the gopher-hole didn't stay in one place,

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but bobbed about fast as it could and the milk, in trying to follow, spouted out all over Noll's face and thence off onto father's black breeches which happened to be his Sunday second best. There the milk stream sank out of sight like a brook that flows into a bog, though father didn't seem to lose track of it for all that, but kept pinching the bog place and lower down, as if the stream might still be flowing under the surface, as streams in bogs are sometimes thought to do. In time the milk supply was exhausted and Noll had not swallowed a spoonful, unless you count a few drops that flew about in his lungs and mixed coughs with the righteous indignation that was burning in his pinioned little breast. His spirit, however, was not conquered. It chanted the chant of

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the victor. It could soar, though he lay on his back.

But this was not the end of the story, notwithstanding it was the end of the milk. He found himself suddenly reversed, eyes staring at the boards of the floor—there was a knot-hole in one of the boards and it was filled up with a plug. The wood was worn away all around it. He remembered that knot-hole for years. At first he thought his father was beaten. At all events the milk was given up. He was congratulating himself that the storm had blown over, when he felt a sudden change in the wind. A cold breeze had struck him in the rear, had caught him without even an umbrella and blown off his last thickness of cotton, leaving him to the mercy of the elements. Then it appeared that the

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storm instead of being over had just broken with unparalleled fury. It fell in loud swift claps of thunder, and the lightning went prickling all through him, radiating from his mountains to his valleys—as for mountains they were raging volcanoes, and what was worse, they were flattening into prairies, they seemed melting and extending all over. He was getting flatter and thinner every clap, or better say, each fresh peal of thunder. He was becoming like electrified paper, crackling and rustling in the tempest.

He thought he was killed and left for dead when his father put him down on the floor. But, alas! he was still alive to torture. He lay fairly radiating energy, sound, electricity, and motion; yes, even a dull light came from him, two dull glowing volcanic

fires. The worst was he was left quite alone. Father, cook, no one, to appreciate. It was discouraging to radiate always with no sympathetic body to reflect back the heat. He radiated for some time, however, from the simple necessity of expansion. Then he stopped crying, only for a minute, just to listen to hear if anyone were moving. It occurred to him that the rest might have been killed in the storm, and he cried in pity for his lonely condition. Then he listened again.

No; as he held his breath between sobs, there was the sound of cook walking in the pantry. Tramp, tramp, tramp—her heavy shoes—back and forth as usual at her work. She seemed quite unruffled by the whirlwind. Was it possible he was the only one turned over? In time she came

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out into the kitchen and gave him a pleasant little nod. Could it be she had forgotten already? He watched her, then followed her slyly. Some way he was feeling better inside. There had been such a burning in his heart, and now it was quite gone away. His father had drawn it out to the surface, and it had all burned down to cool ashes, prickly but pleasant and restful, like the taste of the school-master's beer.

Cook poured some nice milk into a mug—a pretty mug with red flowers upon it. There was something about those red flowers that was very attractive. They didn't look like anything that grew on the window-ledge. He wondered how they came to have that color. He sidled around the mug and watched it interestedly. It seemed just

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the right kind for cook to handle. He liked to watch her pour the white milk into it. He wished he were that mug and full of that milk. It seemed so comfortable and easy.

Then cook came smiling to help him, but this time not smiling artificially. He loved the old cook after all. "Noll want his milk now?" she said.

She took him up in her lap and helped him to hold the mug steady. Really, he got on very well. He was sorry when the bottom began to show. Then cook gave him a nice lump of sugar and he went off to play with the cat.

It was fully a half an hour after when he happened to think of the vow, and how he had resolved to be firm. Then he was so vexed that he tried to feel sick and throw the milk up again

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for principle's sake, but somehow he couldn't make it come.

Vows are disagreeable things anyway, especially after they are broken.





VIII

THE great difference between poets and prosy people is in the kind of things that they want. Prosies want only such things as other people have in a little more expensive material. Poets want everything on earth, and mostly in good time they get it. More than that, they want everything over the earth, and everything under, just to try it. And

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mostly they get all that, too, especially everything under.

Noll was a poet, as we know. Sister Jane and cook and his mother, together with Catharine and the neighbors, were all prosies, of course. They wanted what other people had. Brother Henry, being a boy, didn't count. Boys are always exceptions, though never exceptionally good so far as we can gather from statistics.

Sister Jane was always very good. You can tell by the things that she wanted. Here is her list:

1. Candy.
2. Rewards of merit every Sunday.
3. A new dress like Nelly Murphy's, but with pink ribbons on the shoulders, instead of green. She was not near so black as Nelly, but she would never think of

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wearing green. As for Nelly, she looked like a fright.

4. A gilt-edged prayer-book at confirmation.
5. A wash that will take off freckles.
6. A pair of new shoes.
7. A prince to ask for a glass of water and to fall in love with her at first sight.
8. A canary all of her own.
9. A black devil to torture brother Henry every time he came round to tease.
10. And,

Two little angels beside her bed,
One at the foot and one at the head.

Catharine's list was much shorter than Jane's. Probably because she was shorter with it. Only three things:

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1. More gooseberry jam on her bread.
2. Hair that is loose at both ends,
and can be taken off to be
combed.
3. A doll with real meat inside
instead of sawdust.

Noll's list just went on forever. The whole of this book wouldn't hold it. He wanted everything he saw. He wanted to touch it, to hold it in his hands, to listen to it, to see if it ticked, to smell, and to taste, and to swallow. After he had wanted all the things he had seen, he wanted to see all the things that he heard of, or felt, or smelled, or tasted. Cook said he was a dirty little pig because he took the tarts out of his mouth after chewing them to see what the sour taste looked like. He even wanted things he couldn't see, or hear, or taste, or

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smell, or anything. For example, his mother told him about angels, and he cried for one to hold it in his arms. His father showed him a picture of Satan, and immediately he wished for a tail, and went out behind the house and felt his back to see if a little tail might not be sprouting. When he found there was nothing there at all he cried because he could not have Satan come up and show him his tail. His mother said it was very, very wicked. -

Oh, he wanted just everything! He wanted the moon, so as to kiss it. It was sorry, and had tears on its face. When it became a hook he wanted it to go back to a platter, and when it was gone altogether he wanted to know where it had gone. No one seemed to help him very much. Most people rather seemed to hinder.

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Everybody said to him, "No, no." He never got so tired of anything in his life.

The thing that he surely wanted hardest was the fire, and they wouldn't let him have it. Everybody else had it without question. Even Catharine was allowed to get some on a splinter and set it on its little white roller, where it danced high up on the mantel. But no one would let him get a chance. On that very day that he almost got it cook put a wire cage around the hearth, for no other reason he knew than to spite him, because she saw he wanted it. He pretended he didn't for a long time to fool her, but the cage was left there just the same.

The schoolmaster was a rational man. One would think he might be made to understand. He was very

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fond of fire himself, and ate a little cupful every evening. He sucked it up through a straw that was fastened in the bottom of the cup. It must have been awfully good from the look that came into his face. He swallowed the fire, every bit, and blew the smoke out of his mouth. Then he would tell a long story, the fire in his stomach felt so good. But when Noll just begged for one suck the schoolmaster said the usual "No, no," and "That is not good for little babies." So that was enough of the schoolmaster. No satisfaction to be got out of him.

Cook was affectionate and soft-hearted. She would give him most anything if he cried for it. He used to watch her wistfully every evening when she made ready to light that dear candle, carrying the little flame on the

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splinter, and sticking it off on to its roller. He so wanted to get that cunning little wriggling flame in his hands, to snuggle it softly in his pocket; and he would promise not to eat it at all, but would give it right back in a minute; he held up his hands and whimpered coaxingly, with all of the pity he could muster, but cook caught him up in her arms and cried and said, "Bless his little heart," till he had to kick and work himself away, he was that disgusted with her unreasonable behavior. If cook was always pretending that she didn't like men how was it that she liked him so much? He was growing up to be a man, and she would have the trouble of changing her mind. Anyway, she might give him that fire if she loved him, wriggling there like a little red mouse.

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Pat was a pretty nice fellow, though cook made out she couldn't endure him. He only came in the evening, and he smelt of green things in the woods. Noll liked the herby green smell. He liked Pat, too, along with it, for he gave him his clasp knife to play with, though he never would open the blade. Then he took him up on his back and cantered about like a horse, and when they were all aches with laughing they sat down upon each other's knee and Pat sang a big song, and jounced him, and it all went, "Te-row-dowdy-dow!" Yes, Pat was his favorite those days. He liked him because he was kind to the cook. He called her Marimedarlin, and his voice went like music through that name.

One night Pat came into the kitchen singing like a whole choir in church.

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"Good evening. Marimedarlin!" he said, with a wink down to Noll.

Cook was that minute lighting the candle. She had not yet put it on the shelf. She felt so proud at being seen with the fire that it made her a bit haughtier than usual. She said something scornful about men, and tossed her head so as her pink cheek turned toward him.

Then Pat began wanting that fire. You could see his mouth hungering for it.

"Give me one, Mary," he said, with a wonderful sweetness in his voice, trembling, and yet strong and steady.

"Go 'way, you brute," said the cook. "I've only now lighted the candle, and Noll is getting a big boy."

But Pat was so egaer that he didn't care. He was crazy to get at that fire.

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He made a grab at it, too, but quick as a wink cook had it behind her. She had forgotten Pat's arms were so long. They slipped around her as easy. He took the little fire in his hand, right between his thumb and forefinger, and then he must have popped it into his mouth, for Noll heard it go smack, smack, smack, as it would do, you know, if in water. It was so dark that he couldn't see much, but he could feel somehow that Pat was enjoying the taste. The air was just like electricity, and Pat's feeling seemed to go through it.

Oh, but the sly, sly cook, trying to keep fooling the baby! For when she had thought to struggle away from Pat and had set another fire on the candle, and put that safe upon the shelf, she pretended that "just one" meant a

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cook, and she brought Pat half a dozen or more, and she even put a few tarts in with them, but Noll could see through all of that. "Just one" had meant really the fire, and Pat was still smacking his lips in a way that tarts and cookies never made him. So Pat liked to play with fire as well as others, and there was no hope of getting help from him. But why was it the cook looked so pleased? She had said that he mustn't, and was haughty, but as soon as he had got hold of the fire she never resisted a mite, and later had been pleased and gave him cookies. Surely she was not very consistent.

Another time his mother was washing the little roller's saucer and putting a new roller back, for they seemed to wear out like his stockings, only beginning at top instead of bottom. She

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gave him the saucer to play with, and then he wanted the roller along with it. That, too, was put in his hands. It was nicer to feel than the saucer, part slippery and part rough, like the cat's tongue, just what makes you want to grab it. Well, he felt like a king with his scepter. He walked over grandly to the fireplace, took up a splinter from the corner and motioned with a gesture of authority to have the cage taken away.

Mothers are such uncertain creatures. You can never tell what they'll do next. What did Noll's do, for instance, but catch him up in her arms and cover his face with swift kisses. It took all the dignity out of him. Nor did it help him to get at the fire. After she had hugged him and called him cunning she grew very stern, like his father,

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and said, "No, no; burn, burn," several times with other things equally foolish.

"Burn, burn!"—was anything ever so stupid?

"Burn, burn," was the way that the tea bit his tongue when he tried to drink it from the cup. It had first to be turned into the saucer. Was that why the candle had its saucer? Of course not, or else it would have bitten Pat's tongue. He didn't stop for any saucer. He was in too big a hurry for that. Noll thought over the matter some time, but concluded his mother was mistaken.

At last the long looked for chance came, as things do come, they say, if only we wait long enough. Sister Catharine was spinning her top on the table and Jane was waiting for her turn, when the top flew off on to the

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floor and brother Henry hit it with his foot and picked it up and put it in his pocket, pretending to look as much as ever, though he had it in his pocket all the time. Catharine got down on all fours and crawled around under the table, but Jane thought she heard it strike against the settle, and persisted in poking under that.

"Take the candle and look," cried brother Henry. "Maybe it hid in the corner." Then he stuck his head under the table, for he was laughing so he couldn't stay in the light.

Noll was watching his chance. He knew there was no time for him like a quarrel, and things under the table were getting warm.

"You got it!" said Catharine, standing up, forgetting she was under the table, and giving her head a loud bump

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that made the dishes jump up and shiver.

"Never!" said Henry, telling the truth, for he had slipped the top back on the table.

"But you're laughing!" insisted Catharine.

"Because you bumped your head," replied Henry.

"Honor bright, you haven't got it?"

"Honor bright," affirmed Henry.

"Hope to die?" said Catharine, solemnly.

"Hope to die!" said Henry, just as solemn.

Jane was standing up to act as judge. They had forgotten about Noll and the candle.

Wink, wink, wink, went the little fire, as if trying to jump off the roller and fly away up the black chimney. But it was

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tied at the foot and couldn't get loose and Noll was slipping nearer and nearer.

He was thinking how it would wriggle in his fingers, and how he would snuggle it first and only eat it the last minute when they came to take it from him.

Oh, how he jumped when he grabbed it! Oh, how he shouted when he seized it, right in his two little hands!

Then something terrible happened! The little fire bit him, oh, dreadfully, and then got away after all. Bit him worse than tea on his tongue, and then hopped away and flew up the chimney or he s'posed it did, though he had his eyes shut. He had shut them without thinking when he grabbed it. Oh, and such pains in his hands running clear up to his elbows and chewing and biting all the time! You may well believe

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that he screamed. He screamed steady all the rest of that evening. It was little comfort to him that sister Jane was sent off to bed in disgrace; and brother Henry as well, and he bigger than Jane, too, and crying. That didn't help the bites on Noll's hands, nor did it console him in his disappointment. They wrapped his hands in sweet oil and flour, and he had to wear the bandages for days.

That was enough of fire for Noll. Weeks after he cried and he fussed, if Henry so much as pointed at the candle or wriggled his tongue like a flame. No one could get him to go near the hearth. Cook took away the wire cage to the attic. She said it was unlocking the stable after the horse had been stolen, though he didn't know quite what she meant.

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As for Pat and the schoolmaster and the rest—well, they certainly had very poor taste.





IX

NOLL was losing sight of the fairies. They seemed to fade away before his eyes. He knew they were there just the same. He felt them in his thinking more than ever; but fairies are very shy with grown folk, and Noll was growing bigger every day. He couldn't exactly make out just where and when he felt them in himself. He thought sometimes it was after he was good, but oftener it

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was not in himself but in other people maybe, or in animals. It made him want to hug them up close and listen to the beating of their hearts.

Of all the animals he seemed to feel it most in the dogs. Especially in their yellow dog Tom, who was shaggy, and big, and mild-eyed. Noll used to squeeze Tom and squeeze him till it seemed he was a real fairy in dog shape, and Tom seemed to think he was, too,—he stood so still to be squeezed.

The cats had the least fairy of all. They liked squeezing something the same as did Tom, only they couldn't stand it so hard. They purred and arched up their backs and were wonderfully pleased when he stroked them. He listened to hear their hearts sing, but while it was pleasant to think of, it

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was not like the feeling of fairies. The cats kneaded their bread with their hands, and spread fingers when he tickled their palms. They narrowed down their eyes and looked happy; nothing could seem more contented—but as for the whisperings of fairies Noll listened and listened in vain.

But Tom, he was big with their feeling. It panted in him, it was so alive.

When he stood still and Noll squeezed him hard, it was like being two there in one, without any room to get lonesome, they were mingled so close in each other.

Then Tom was so nice to go walking. Better than any of the two-legged people. There was brother Henry, for instance, who always walked in a hurry, and when Noll was getting hopelessly behind and discouraged and feeling

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his temper, Henry would turn around and say "cry baby," and "girl," and things equally horrid, even singing them in very naughty rhymes.

When Jane went she kept him by the hand, and that made him feel all one-sided, one arm swinging and one up, it was as if he were walking with three legs. Then Jane went always the wrong way, exactly opposite from the direction he wanted, and she stopped at the flowers, and the shrubs, and all things that didn't amuse him and walked past the toads and nice worms and the things that he wanted to play with.

Catharine was better than Jane, but even Catharine didn't understand children. She often thought him utterly helpless when he could have easily managed if she'd only given him the

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time. But no, she must pick him up in her arms and lug him as the cat lugs her kittens, and though she began by clasping his waist it was only the loose waist of his clothes and that soon slipped up around his neck and left him dangling and bare with only his head under cover, the rest of him swinging in the wind striking briars or anything handy, while behind him came Catharine's knees churning away like two engines.

But some of the grown folk were worse—father, holding one arm straight up with big legs swinging past his ears, threatening to rub one off any minute; mother, with her mountain of skirts that tangled him and tripped him and smothered him; or cook, with her feet so uncertain he never could tell where they would settle. No; he pre-

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ferred Catharine and her dangling. Though when Catharine fell forward she fell heavy. It mashed him till he bulged out at the eyes.

Then the combinations of people—they were very confusing. Father and mother, for instance, taking him Sunday to church. Big legs swinging on one side, silken skirts wrapping him in their folds, his arms stretched up over his head and his hat stretched down over one eye with its rubber twisting in his hair every time father's leg hit the hat brim. It kept his loose eye pretty busy looking out for a place to put his feet; and often there was no place at all, but he swung as on a flying trapeze and even that would not hold together, for father swung his arm one way, while mother swung her arm the other; no wonder he was a good boy

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at church, till the neighbors all thought he was stupid. It was not stupidity that ailed him, he was counting dislocations and sprains.

Then the Henry and Jane combination, with Catharine on the other side of Henry. That went well enough till they raced, but they always began it with racing, down-hill racing at that. Oh, how that stretched his legs! He found he must hit ground every step or his steps got mixed up and he dragged. Then Henry complained he was too little, and rather than be called too little he would split even up to his neck. He was thankful that his collar was tight; it would keep him together at the top. But he knew it was dangerous business, this taking such tearing long steps. He used to slip off behind the shed when it was over and examine

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himself carefully and earnestly. If serious damage had been done he felt it was well to know the worst. He didn't know what he would do about it exactly if he found that he was giving way.

But old dog Tom—he understood. He knew how to take a walk. If Noll even so much as started out alone Tom would get up and follow sedately. No matter how tired he was; perhaps he had been barking all night, keeping the moon at proper distance, or perhaps he had been chasing the pigs or tormenting old Daisy in the garden; no matter how much he needed his sleep, whenever he saw Noll start alone he was up and walking beside him, respectful, but not bothersome or familiar—all that a companion ought to be.

Noll liked the waving tall grass with the wind making cloud shadows in it.

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He liked the flowers rustling, too, on their stems, and stopped to kiss them when no one was looking. Jane pulled off the poor flowers' heads and tied them with necks tight together, but Noll just kissed them very softly and old Tom understood it every bit, and sometimes he kissed them right after. In case a few heads were knocked off—for knocking off heads *is* such pleasure—Noll carried every one to the brook and placed them right side up in the water where they would not wither at all, but float away on merry raft journeys whirling and laughing all the time.

It was a tiny brook running through the pasture and it had the fairies in it, too, the same as the flowers and the grass. Tom understood and walked in and lay down and lapped and

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looked happy. Noll would have waded in, too, but the water rolling under his feet seemed to set his round head a-rolling, he felt as if he were sliding up hill and altogether uncomfortable and uneasy. So he remembered what his mother had told him, and sat on the edge and looked over. Purr, purr, purr, went the brook, much as if it were the cat begging supper, only the brook purred away all the time; and the ferns bent over to listen or gently to stroke it on the back. Noll used to stroke it, too, very gently, and pick the stones from the way of its feet, till the brook purred that it liked the stones there they held it the longer to talk to him. He used to sing to it, too, thinking the words as he sang them. He never wrote his songs in those days, but he thought them something like this:

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Fairy brook, fairy brook,
Listen, I sing you
Words of my love.
Fairy brook, fairy brook,
Look, now, I bring you
Flowers from above.

Fairy brook, fairy brook,
Deep in your shadows
I see your flowers.
Fairy brook, fairy brook,
In your brown meadows
I dream for hours.

Fairy brook, fairy brook,
If you but love me
Tell me so, true.
Fairy brook, fairy brook,
My face to prove me
Shines back from you.

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At first he was a little surprised to find the same baby in the brook that he knew in the misty window in the parlor, but he had given the matter a little hard thinking, and concluded it was not the same baby at all. In fact the misty window in the parlor had ceased to interest him for some time. The baby in there was not genuine, but was a pretended baby some way of himself. Everything he did it did, very stupid.

But this brook baby was different. It was himself, and yet it was more. That showed how the brook was a fairy and how it loved him, and loved Tom, and the flowers, and the ferns, and the trees, and the sky. For everything it gave back it beautified, and that is what love does, you know. The sky was bluer, the color of the flowers

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richer, the trees more tall and grand,
Tom more real and like his fairy, and
the picture of Noll's own face more
subtle, speaking the poetry that was
behind it. Yes, it was simple as any-
thing how the brook loved, and re-
flected like a true loving heart.

And old Tom lay in it and lapped it.
Dear shaggy, dripping old Tom!





X

OF ALL the people that the fairies showed most in, Pat was the very best of everybody. That was funny, for it wasn't in his face. His face was heavy and ugly, at least till you came to know it well. Nor was it any more in his body, for he was awkward and big-jointed and stiff. Noll decided it was most in his hands. Pat

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had big coarse hands and rough, but if they so much as once touched you why then you felt the fairies in a flash.

Pat was all the time digging in the soil. He was born, he said, with a spade in his hand, and that seemed interesting to Noll.

"What was I born with in my hand?" he asked one day when he was bigger.

"A trump," said Pat, looking at him keenly.

Noll thought this over some days and wondered why he didn't have it now and go about sounding it like Gabriel.

"What is a trump?" he asked one day.

"It's a thing that no matter what turns up you can always make the best of it," said Pat.

"But do I have one in my hand?"

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asked Noll, spreading out ten very dirty fingers.

"You have it in your heart, my lad, which is better, for no one can ever take it from you."

Noll thought on this for some weeks. Pat knew a good deal about hearts. He gave his to cook on St. Valentine's day, and she gave back hers in return. And now their two hearts were one. This was difficult at first to understand. He was never quite sure he had mastered it; but it was something like the Trinity, only one less, and very beautiful to think of.

There was something going on between Pat and the cook. Some secret they wouldn't tell anybody, though everybody but Noll knew about it. That was strange, too, for he saw more than any of the rest and heard almost

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everything there was. Some things, though, he could not hear, they put their heads so close together when they spoke. But the sound of their voices was very pretty, much like the murmuring of the brook, which is really the love-laughter of fairies who live down in the brown soil and make cradles for the new-born little flower children.

Cook was doing a great deal of sewing in those days. The kitchen was filled up with white muslin, and crinoline, and laces. Jane helped on the sewing all the time, and Catharine picked all the basting threads. Once she upset her bread from the table and it fell jam-side down on cook's veil, and cook scolded and scolded so hard, and Catharine cried hard as cook scolded, till finally they kissed and made up, but all of it had taken so much time that

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they had cold potatoes for supper and father said it was really too much.

It wasn't so strange that cook should be sewing as it was that Pat should be interested. What should Pat, with his spade, care for sewing? But always he was hanging around. He held the little knick-knacks in his hand, and pinched at the laces and the flowers with a look of as much wisdom in his face as if he were buying potatoes. Sometimes he would pinch Noll's cheeks, too, and then the fairies said everything was all right as ever, but still Noll wished Pat would tell him the secret. It wasn't quite fair to a friend.

While cook was busy with her sewing Pat was fitting up his cottage: mending the roof, white-washing the walls, making a new cupboard, putting a fourth leg on the table, where it had

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before leaned against the wall, and doing all sorts of nice things. Noll enjoyed all this because it made blocks for him to play with. He asked Pat one day about the house, and why he was making it over, whereat Pat took him up in his arms and carried him out to the pear-tree where the robins had a nest in the branches, though Noll never was allowed to go near it.

"Look over into the nest," said Pat, his voice gentle as the big hands that lifted.

Noll looked over very much excited and saw a mass of wriggling little birds all sitting with their mouths stretched wide open.

"Now come away," said Pat, softly, "for the father bird and mother bird won't like it. But that's why I'm building my nest. Just like the robins in the springtime."

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Noll felt that Pat had really told him, but he didn't understand it, and kept still. However, he liked to feel how much he was trusted, and he sat down and listened to the robins and watched them hop in the grass. Hop, hop, hop, went Father Robin, precisely as if he were sneezing. He knew what he was about. So did Pat, who was singing as he worked.

Cook was as interested in Pat's cottage as he was interested in her sewing. She crossed the pasture every evening to admire it, and sometimes she would take Noll along. He liked the cool pasture in the evening when the flowers were saying their prayers and the stars waking up in the sky. The greedy sheep and cows ate and ate. The dew on the grass made it juicy. All the crickets sang sleep,

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sleep, sleep, sitting by the cradles of their babies. Pat and Mary liked the evening time, too, for they walked back slowly—very slowly. Pat would pick up Noll and hold him close and warm to his breast; and oh, then, how the fairies sang in him! Throb, throb, throb went his heart, warmer with love even than Tom's heart. Noll just sank off to sleep he was so happy. Pat's hands were so restful and soothing.

One Sunday there was an awful to do. Everybody was fidgeting with excitement. It woke Noll up an hour early, and mother, instead of cook, was getting breakfast. Was the world turning backward, or what was it? Noll felt as fidgety as the rest. There was not any salt in his porridge, and Tom and the cats had a fight. Henry

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was the only one who was calm. He sat on the flour-chest and whistled.

The hubbub seemed to center around cook, who was actually sitting in the parlor dressed like an angel in a picture, with flowers on her head and white gloves and white shoes with very high heels and everything about her pure white. Was it possible that cook was going to fly off to Heaven and leave them to do their own work? Noll would see if she had any wings. He thought he smelled something like burnt feathers, and the candle being lighted on the table, it was easy for her wings to get singed. He was edging around to get respectfully behind her when sister Jane seized upon him fiercely.

"What a face for a wedding!" she cried.

She dragged him out to the washtub

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and plastered him over with soap, which took nasty wet water to wash off that trickled down his neck and up his elbows, while a cold rag mopped at his features till he felt himself getting fainter and fainter every minute, like a picture being washed off a slate. By the time he was through with rebelling and was dressed and made ready for church, cook had flown off without kissing him or even so much as saying good-by. She appeared again at church service, however, sitting by a most elegant gentleman who was dressed up in everything new, black broadcloth and white linen and high collar and the most wonderful polish on his hair that smelled elegantly through the whole church.

Noll thought of the words of the hymn, "With perfume and oil He

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anointeth my head"—this gentleman had just been anointed.

Once, in the middle of the sermon, Noll got a terrible start. He had been watching the stiff elegant gentleman—he could not keep his eyes off him—when he saw him give a quick jerk with his shoulder that reminded him exactly of Pat. It was a shock, and took time to recover. Perhaps he had dozed and been dreaming. Things do go crooked in dreams, what was mother may be the schoolmaster, or two people easily be one. Still, he liked the elegant gentleman for that little jerk of the shoulder; and when after church should have been over, but the people all sat in their pews and the gentleman more perfumed than ever as soon as he began to stir round, when he rose and walked with the

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angel cook up to the altar and they stood holding hands while his father talked to the cook as if he had never seen her before, and talked to the gentleman, too, quite as his dignity demanded, why then Noll just felt good toward that gentleman and knew he should like him in time, and he hoped he would not sail off to Heaven borne up in his odorous cloud, but would stay and get acquainted with Pat who, for some reason, was nowhere to be seen. He was thinking this over confusedly while the people were all shaking hands, and when angel cook stooped down and kissed him and the elegant gentleman took him in his arms, then it became a dream after all, and the gentleman did change to Pat, and his heart was thumping inside, and Noll was the happiest of his life.



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All that day was most wonderful: eating good things and visiting and rejoicing. Noll knew it was all done for him, and he walked about and enjoyed every minute.

But in the evening it was curious. They formed a procession in the yard as if they were going to play "Here we go round the raspberry bush,"—his father and mother and all of them, but angel cook and gentleman Pat were *it*; and then they walked over to the cottage and blessed the two and left them on the threshold.

Noll felt like crying, but he didn't. He winked back and swallowed down and smiled. He was thinking of the two hearts that were one, and of the nest of the father and mother robin. And though he was sad to go away and leave them, he was glad, too, to look

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back and see them smiling. And for all the sweet pain in his heart, this was the happiest day of his life.





XI

THE time when a child comes to manhood has often been disputed in the law. Some say it should be at twenty-one years, and some at eighteen or even younger. The whole controversy is unnecessary, however. There is but one time when the boy becomes man, and that is when he wears his first pants. If you doubt it just watch the nearest baby who first shows to the world he has legs.

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Legs are the highest gift of nature, the proof of the superiority of man. As long as one is forced to go about in the world a fluffy bunch of rags from throat to ankles what can you expect of him that's manly? He may be a chicken or a girl. But pants—only put him in pants—and there is your man in a minute. Look at the head held aloft. Note but the hands in the pockets, or study the long swinging stride. It is customary to marvel at the butterfly that has come from a crawling loathsome worm, but I tell of a greater metamorphosis: the changing of a baby to a man.

Noll was in his first pants. They had come to him like an inspiration from Heaven, unasked for and all unannounced. He had waked as on any other morning and stood about in his

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long flannel night-gown waiting, as usual, to be dressed, though not eager or particular about it. His mother took him up on her lap and began in the everyday fashion. Sometimes he counted to kill time. Dressing was so very monotonous. It went like this:

Number one first:

"One, one, one, one, one, one."

Off came the flannel night-gown at once. It was great fun to get away and scamper when the thick dragging thing was kicked down. Mother said it was naughty to do so, and everyone who saw him cried shame! But he felt like the colt in the pasture or a fish or a frog in the water. They had such a time of it catching him that his mother got so she would watch and only take the night-gown half off before slipping

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the long shirt upon him. Then he began counting two.

"Two, two, two, two, two, two."

Put an arm in a sleeve. No matter if it's wrong mother'll turn it. There are buttons down the front of the shirt to shut the gate where the head just drove through. If you begin at the top button it doesn't make any difference. There are just the same number from the bottom. Now comes the skirt to join on to it, flying over the head like an umbrella:

"Three, three, three, three, three."

The skirt has a hook and an eye. Once he had a skirt with a button. A big button that dug into his back. The hook and the eye are much better, because there are two instead of one. The eye can't see anything, of course, though it would be handy enough if it

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could. It could watch out when he went to steal sugar, and see who was coming in at the door. Anyone but Pat and you must stop it. Pat never tells on a fellow.

The dress was fourth, but Noll couldn't count beyond three, so he began over at one.

"One, one, one, one, one, one."

How he hated the dress! Smothery, and flouncy, and fuzzy. Sometimes it got wound round his face or tangled in his arms wrong side foremost. It had a smell of stale milk and peaches, and reminded him of yesterday's dinner. There were both buttons and hooks and eyes on the dress, and it lasted through a long time of counting.

"One, one, one, one, one, one, one, one."

But this morning something was

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different. He got mixed up at *two*, and lost count. The shirt had gone on as usual. There was no trouble at all with the shirt. Then over the shirt came a waist, but he was used to that in cold weather. He looked out the window to see if it were raining, and was surprised to find the day bright and warm. But the skirt would be *three* to-day. He waited for the umbrella descending.

"Three, three, three, three, three, three."

And then the pants dawned upon him. He looked down and saw himself two-legged.

He was a man!

His amazement made him quite speechless. Was he dreaming? Or was this like Pat's being the gentleman? Or the two hearts that were really one? The two hearts were

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something more like it, for there were two legs and they were one man. The skirt didn't come down an umbrella, but the pants had slipped up instead. It was like putting a glove on a hand, except there were only two fingers. Up, up, came the pants on his legs, and button, button, the stiff buttons on his waist; the mother could get but two buttons done, for Noll took a leay to the floor, and stood as was fitting to his dignity. He was not a baby in a dress to be sitting in the lap of a woman.

He strutted around in a circle exactly like the old turkey-gobbler, looking down fondly at his legs and admiring the shapeliness of them.

Blue! and his favorite color! Something like Pat's, only bluer. He was afraid to let his mother finish button-

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ing them. She might change her mind and take them off. He tried to do the buttons himself, but in looking down to get at the buttons his legs came into such elegant view that he forgot again all about the buttons and continued his circling as before. Finally his mother was permitted, for sister Jane was coming up the stairway and would be shocked at seeing a man partly dressed.

He was fearful they would offer to carry him, so he headed the procession down-stairs. He could see that they treated him differently. Their manner was more respectful in approaching him. They gathered around in a circle admiring, as women do gather around a man and as is perfectly natural and proper; they spoke of his manliness and carriage, and especially applauded his high step. He did

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nearly faint for a moment on making the discovery of the pockets. New joys were making him dizzy. But soon he had his hands well established, and was walking about surveying the women carelessly, even spitting out grandly and successfully as he had seen the men do at the grocer's.

Breakfast was tedious that morning with his legs out of sight under the table. He was afraid he might be taken for a baby. In fact Catharine did forget and brought him a bib, but he met the insult as it deserved, and Catharine retired to her porridge.

Old Tom was sleeping in the sunshine when he set out to take a morning walk. What would he think when he saw the new man? He got up as if to go along, but seeing the legs instead of dresses thought, "This one can care for

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himself," and lay down and went on with his sleeping. Tom was a dog of understanding, but Noll was not so sure of the red rooster's wisdom. He had been, as a baby, very much afraid of the red rooster. There was a wicked look in his eyes that seemed to say, "I will jump on any baby's head and scratch and flap my wings if I want to." Would he, to-day, have intelligence enough to recognize the difference of the legs? Noll sidled far around.

Brother Henry called from the stable, "Say, Noll, are you going after gophers?" That was recognition indeed, but he was strong enough to put it by grandly. No, he was going for a walk.

Pat was digging in the field of potatoes. Pat was the test of the world. What would he say when he saw the new man? Would he presume on old

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familiarities, and have to be reminded of his place? Not at all. Pat was the climax of his victories.

"Good morning, Mr. Goldsmith," he said, respectfully, pulling the front of his hat. "I hope I see you enjoying the morning."

To tell the truth Noll was a little taken aback himself just at first. He looked around to see if his father was behind him, but no, he was the only man present. It was clear Pat was speaking to him. Was it possible he had taken him for his father? He had heard there was a family resemblance. Then in a moment it flashed upon him that his name was now Mr. Goldsmith. He was sorry to lose Noll though, for he liked it. It was a pleasure to see Pat so respectful, but there was a little pain, too, in the pleasure.

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"What do you think of the prospect for potatoes this year?" said Pat, as he would say to the grocer.

Noll spread out his legs and smiled feebly. He wished Pat would speak of his pants, though he appreciated his delicacy of feeling.

"The wind blows a little like rain," began Pat, as a second bold venture.

No sign from Noll this time at all. Was it possible that Pat wasn't ever going to kiss him any more, or toss him up and catch him in his arms?

"Have you heard the news from the village that parliament has passed a resolution——"

But here Noll's chin began to go all a quiver, and Pat caught him up to his breast, pants and all, as if he were a baby, and he kissed him and said, "Bless his dear heart!" and coddled

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him in under his rough chin, and said, "Did he think old Pat didn't know him?" and hugged him up close to his heart.

Well, Noll was better after that, though he did sob and pour tears out like rain. Pat set him down on a sack of potatoes and wiped the tear stains off his face, and then began admiring his pants and pinching his legs slyly through them, pretending to be pinching the cloth, and slapping him gently behind and saying that his shape would break all the hearts in the village; and then on discovering the pockets where only his two fingers would go in—that was the end of all sorrow, for Noll laughed till he rolled over and over. Then at noon Pat asked him home to dinner where Mary took him up in her lap,

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and he decided to have a bib after all because the waist was new like the pants; and all that day he was so happy because Pat knew and yet wasn't any different, and neither did Pat mention the subject that tears had fallen on his new pants.

That night they lay under his pillow. But they were dearer to think Pat had kissed them and kissed them on top of the tears.





XII

THERE was great excitement and rejoicing, for the family was going to move. Noll had never moved in his life, but he thought he should like it immensely. At first he was sure he should like it, but that was before talking with Pat. Catharine had given a different impression.

"Will you move with us?" he asked Pat.

"Sure! We will all move together."

"And will the schoolmaster move?"

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"Well, I should say not the schoolmaster."

"What will the schoolmaster do?"

"I suppose he'll stay where he is."

"Oh, yes; and will the neighbors move?"

"No; just those who live in our house."

"Oh, yes. Why won't the neighbors move?"

But Pat pretended not to hear.

Noll didn't mind repeating a question.

"Why won't the neighbors move?"

"They haven't any place to move to," answered Pat.

That seemed a very good reason. Noll began on a different tack.

"Will we move in the night?"

"No; in the day," said Pat, wondering.

"But won't we all be asleep?"

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"No; we'll be awake all right."

"And will we see the moving, every bit?"

"Sure, we'll see it. Why not?"

"The trees, and the well, and the pasture, and the brook, and the barn, and everything?"

"Oh, they don't move at all. They stay here where they are."

"Oh, yes! Do they stay here with the neighbors?"

"Sure, they stay right here always."

"Why do they stay here with the neighbors?"

But Pat pretended not to hear.

"Why do they stay here with the neighbors?"

"They haven't any place to move to," said Pat.

"But they want to move with us though, don't they?"

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"I think they do," said Pat, speaking fondly. "Noll, you know more than the schoolmaster, I guess."

"I'll go and whisper to them every one, that I'm sorry and that I'll love them just the same for always. And I'll tell them not to mind the old neighbors if they walk by without speaking in the morning."

He went off whispering softly to everything, to the fence and the well-curb and the pear-tree; and all of the flowers he kissed softly; and he patted the brown brook on the back.

"Don't mind about the neighbors," he repeated; "Noll will love you just the same as he does now."

Pat, too, must have been something of a poet, for he took up a handful of the sweet earth and kissed it, and prayed God would bless little Noll.

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And though Pat had been a big man for years there were tears just like Noll's in his eyes.

The packing was interesting, however, the sewing up of parlor furniture in covers, and the taking all the pictures from their pegs. It was curious to look at the backs of the bureaus and the heavy things that stood against the walls. Then Noll found a funny old rattle that he had played with when he was only a child.

Outside the things were moving, too. The pigs were being driven down the lane and the poultry was shut up in boxes, where the geese stuck their heads out the top and looked as if they were baked into a pie, like the four and twenty blackbirds of the story. A long row of carts was being loaded, and things looked funny on those carts.

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For instance, there was the dignified and upright kitchen safe sprawling disgracefully on its back, its doors unbuttoned in front and pillows and cushions bulging out of it. The parlor table had its feet sticking up stiff and helpless like a sparrow that has died in the rain. And the stately old clock from the kitchen had been put to bed in a mattress with a towel tied around its face as if it were suffering from toothache.

Inside again Noll went all excited. He could not stay outside or in. Round and round the empty rooms he and Catharine went chasing. They hid behind bedsteads and cupboards and upset a stack of slats in a corner, that came down with a magnificent clatter. Sister Jane said they were very inconsiderate, but Jane was unpacking her

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box for the third time that morning to get something she had put in the bottom. She had been packing and unpacking that box for a week, till the covers were wearing off of things with the packing and everything was getting shabby and dim. Catharine had no packing to do. She would carry her doll Emmeline in her arms. The poor creature had nothing of a wardrobe, for the pup had dragged it all into the orchard and worried everything past recognition.

Henry put his things in his pockets, tops, marbles, a pop-gun with potato, two birds' nests and four handfuls of sundries tied up in parcels with string. It bunched up the legs of his trousers till Pat thought he was suffering from spavin, but Henry was used to Pat's joking and stood about importantly

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helping, giving advice to anyone handy and forgetting to watch the horse that was nervous, as his father had bade him to do.

Noll thought he, too, would be important like Henry and help with the rest of the men. He would carry the brass kettle to the wagon. Jane had carelessly left it on the sink. The sink was so high that he had to stand on a stool, and only then by working and shoving could he tip the brass kettle his way. When it did tip it tipped all at once, and instead of being empty, as he thought, it was half full of mother's grape butter. Noll completed his moving, dyed red, save a white narrow circle around his mouth, that he licked fresh and clean with his tongue.

It was fun to see the carts go off trundling with the mattresses lolling on

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top and the teakettle and bird cage tied dangling. But it was sad when they got into the carriage and couldn't say good-bye to half the things in all of the hurry and confusion. Noll wondered what kind of a country they were moving to. Would there be any brooks there? or pear-trees? or would there be only camels and elephants, and soldiers, and simooms instead? There was one thing especially he longed for, and that was a balloon in the yard. He had heard the school-master tell often of balloons, and he wanted one handy to play with.

The carriage jolted on along the road which had country on the sides much like home, only the houses were different in their windows. People stopped to look at them in passing, and Noll felt quite a man of the world. He

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sang sometimes carelessly to himself to make people think he moved every day, and was rather bored with the monotony.

The villages were funnier than the houses. They seemed to swim round and round. He could hardly keep the houses apart. Sometimes they would fall together like a city of cards, and then, when he thought they were gone, they would suddenly stand up again. Gradually they grew vague and misty. How the noises got jumbled together—the sound of the wheels with the voices and the driver cracking his whip!

Suddenly Noll opened his eyes, sat up and stared all around him. He thought it was going to rain, the sky was so dark and so gloomy.

Then he saw that he was not in the carriage at all, but lying on a mattress

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instead, in the middle of a big empty room.

Brother Henry, being questioned in passing, said they had been moved an hour.





XIII

I GUESS we'd better stop here a minute and think what the story's about. So many people who are listening to stories don't stop to think of them at all; and I suspect that many who are telling them don't do as much of it as they should. We won't make any such mistakes, but will pause to take breath and consider. We will ask ourselves the reason of Noll's moving and then see if you think you can guess.

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No; not one of you right. I knew that you couldn't when I asked you, and I have been laughing all the time.

We authors are a wonderful people. The most wonderful, I suppose, that exist. Not only must we keep in our heads everything that comes into the story, and how it comes, and where, and how much, but besides we must keep in our heads all that might come in maybe, but doesn't, and even that is not all, for there is everything that mustn't come in, no matter how much it may want to, and then everything even that doesn't want to; in fact, everything under the sun. It is really nothing short of a miracle that our heads don't burst with it all. My head is sound, for I've thumped it. It rings like a young gourd in summer—but

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secretly I'll whisper you something about all the rest of the authors. Indeed you'll see it if you notice them carefully. They are all of them a little bit cracked.

But now we must go on with the story and the fairy princess and all that she did, for she was the cause of Noll's moving, though you have forgotten her altogether—I've been keeping her so quiet in my head.

She had never changed her mind for a minute, but was counting on Noll all along. She remembered that twist she had given him when the gnome had wrenched him away, and she wanted him just as much as ever, for she'd never had a poet in her life although she was old as creation; and since poets are more important than anybody, she would not let this one slip from her

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without trying every means to hold him.

The first two years she hadn't tried much, for she didn't like babies very well, and thought they weren't very important. None of the mothers of her kingdom even so much as took care of their own babies. They gave them over to hired servants, people of the kingdom of the gnome. You'd think the gnome people would keep them, and sometimes they did try, I suspect, but the babies not being poets were easily won back to the princess by fine clothes and the vanities of idleness. Once the princess had tried to win Noll (you remember the fate of the saw-collar), but mostly she said, "Never mind. Babies don't know much and aren't interesting, and besides, I must keep in society." This is

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where she made a mistake, as she had always been doing before.

When Noll was two years old, however, the princess thought something should be done. She gave his father a better living and tempted him away from the old house. The new house was bigger and grander and had a garden instead of a potato field, and seventy-five acres of land, which was a good deal in those days for a preacher. Besides being bigger and grander, it was not so much in control of the gnome people. The old place was infested with fairies. Long after the time that Noll lived there they quite got control of the place and used it for dances at midnight and had most hilarious times.

There is a story still among the people of how a landlord tried to

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reclaim this house once from the fairies, and fit it up for one of his tenants and shingle and patch up the roof; but the fairies wouldn't have it at all, and secretly the people were pleased. And they told how every night in the darkness an old hobgoblin, in jack boots, straddled the ridge pole and rode like a witch on a broomstick, kicking with the pointed heels of his boots. And by morning it was said every shingle that the carpenters had put on the day before was kicked into fine shreds and slivers. At last the landlord gave up in despair and left the old house to the fairies.

But this is a long way from our story and the life of our own little Noll. He walked around the new rooms so big with their staring white windows and he wondered why they felt so strange

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and so empty and whether his fairies would get into the walls. No one else seemed to mind the queer feeling, but all spoke of the whiteness and the grandeur. Mother and sister Jane were so pleased that they worked themselves sick doing dusting and were cross and scolding with everybody for tracking in mud from the garden.

A girl named Anna came to help, and she scolded faster than she dusted. Father said it would be a great improvement if she could learn to do both at once. Anna wore a green plaid skirt, and right here I must stop about the princess and tell you a story of this skirt and how Noll actually saved Anna's life, or would have, provided it were in danger.

You see Anna had this green plaid skirt and once when she had her head

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down under the bed trying to dust the bottom of the bedslats, the pup grabbed her skirt and began to worry it and pull some of the gathers out of the waist. Noll laughed. He was tired of Anna's scolding. And after that they were cool with each other.

Anna had the advantage of him in one thing. She knew he was afraid of the dark. She was afraid of it herself, as everyone is for that matter, only she could stand it blacker than he could because she was older and bigger. Noll was a little afraid of a darkened room in the daytime, and Anna wasn't afraid of that a bit but walked in bold without a shiver, where if Noll only shivered just a nite or edged around the door of the dark room, Anna was mean enough to smile, and openly, so as everyone could see her.

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Now this new house they had moved to had a dark room opening off the kitchen that was used for stores and supplies. It was known from the first as the "old bedroom"—the name itself was enough to make one creepy. Who could tell what had happened in there? Noll couldn't, though he tried to imagine.

He was interested in this old bedroom from the first. It brought up the whole question of the dark and why he was really afraid. He decided that the reason he was afraid was not because there was anything to be afraid of, for there wasn't, but because if there should be anything he couldn't see it, and that was terrible indeed. It would not have been quite so bad if there only had been something there. But when there wasn't anything to be

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afraid of and he couldn't have seen it if there had been, that was too much for his nerves and the goose-flesh rose up when he thought of it. Anna might go into that old bedroom if she chose, he would keep a safe distance outside. Even when the door was left open he could feel a cold fog of darkness come out and spread like poison through the kitchen. He kept well away from that fog.

One day the family had all gone and left Anna alone in the house with only Noll to protect her. Old Tom was sleeping on the doorstep; but old Tom was not what he had been for a watchdog, he didn't seem to feel responsibility.

"If they've gone off and left the old house that I have watched all my life what is the use of beginning over to

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watch another?" questioned Tom. "In time they may go off and leave this one." So he slept all day stupidly in the sun, and went around late in the evening a-sniffing suspiciously at the bushes.

Noll was really the guardian of the place, and he felt the responsibility heavily. He didn't like being left in charge at all. Next time he would go along with some one even if he had to cry to get permission. He would have cried to-day if he'd thought of it, but they had scattered in different directions and he couldn't make up his mind which to cry for. It would have been the most fun in the morning to go off with Pat and Mary to the market, but they had shut up their cottage and gone before he was out of his bed. Father went away to the church, but

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that was most as dark as the old bedroom without any kitchen joining to it. Henry had gone swimming at the river, though father thought him at school, while mother and sister Jane and Catharine were making some visits to the poor. Mother would talk to them of their rheumatism, and sister Jane would read them a tract. Catharine carried apples to give them, in case, that is, she wasn't hungry, but she waited so long for Jane to put her hat on that she bit into three of the apples to find out which was the sweetest. That was when Noll should have cried, but he thought Henry was hiding in the attic, and he could follow him and go swimming. Henry really was hid in the garden and went off without saying a word.

So Noll was left quite alone, and told

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to take care of Anna. He followed her about, tagging everywhere, though he knew that she hated to be tagged.

"Why don't you go play?" she said once to him. "Go play with the pup in the shed."

Noll didn't feel like the pup. He didn't feel like anything at all. He wished it was night or to-morrow, and Pat and Mary were home. He wondered what Pat would buy him at the market, whether it would be sweet cake or licorice. He didn't know which he liked best, and hoped for a little of both. How slow and hum-drum life was! Nothing in the world was worth doing!

"Don't drag your feet so," said Anna.

Noll dragged his feet more to spite her.

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Anna went on with her sweeping, throwing dust saucily with her broom.

Noll walked right through the dust, dragging his feet in a pile of it.

Anna didn't say a single word, but her teeth shut together like tongs.

Noll tagged wherever she went.

Pretty soon she took down the pan and started for the old bedroom for potatoes.

Then Noll saw he was beaten, but he didn't let her see that he saw it.

She opened the old bedroom door and entered the dark, gloomy shadow. Noll heard her walking inside. The footsteps echoed fainter and fainter.

How he disliked that old bedroom door! The fog seemed to come out and settle, damp and clammy and smothering. Noll walked out the kitchen as fast as he could before it

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would fill up and choke him. He had to go through an edge of the fog in order to get into the sitting-room. He would have gone out of doors into the sunshine had the bedroom door not been in the way. As it was, he had good reason to hurry. It wasn't so bad immediately after Anna had gone in. She had taken a current of daylight along with her. But now she was in and swallowed up, the sooner he cut through the safer.

He was breathless when the sitting-room was reached, and he closed the door quickly behind him to keep the fog from following in. The sitting-room was not very cheery. It was so big and he was so little. It seemed to be awfully hungry, and he had no appetite at all. It was staring with three big eye windows, and he had only two

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eyes to stare back with, and persisted in keeping them tight shut. No, they had little in common. He decided to slip out the front entry and pass the time in the garden.

The entry itself was uncomfortable, with the stairway coming down in it and no one to come down the stairway from the big empty rooms overhead. If only a cat had come down he would have liked it. He would get out the door and find the cats if the door-latch wouldn't bother in opening, with the stairway all the time at his back. He managed the door-latch, however, though his hands were shaking a little and it did have an ominous rattle.

The sunshine helped back his breath, and he thought he should like the big garden with the hollyhocks stately and gay. But the garden was lonely as the

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house. The house standing by it made it lonely. One would think they would be company for each other, but they doubled their loneliness up. The cats were all gone away mousing, and old Tom was sleeping by the step.

"Wake up and play, Tom!" said Noll; but Tom only stretched and sighed heavily. Noll had to play all alone.

How big and bare the sky was that day, and Pat's cottage, how far off that was, and Pat and Mary not in it even then. Old Daisy was grazing in the lot, but even she looked lonely and strange. The red rooster was very much at ease and chuckling about Noll to the hens. But Noll would not let him see he was afraid if he had to go back to that kitchen filled up with the old bedroom fog.

Why didn't Anna come out? She

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had time to get her potatoes. Perhaps she had come out slyly and was peeling them now at the sink. Noll climbed on the rain-spout to the window and peered through the dim panes of glass. His own face and the trees outside were all he could see there at first. That was startling itself for a minute, enough to give a big man a fright. Then when he did see inside it looked gloomy beyond all description. No Anna peeling potatoes. Bedroom fog choking everything up.

"Come on, Tom, come and play take a walk! Come and chew at this stick in my hand! Here, Tom! Here, Tom! Here, Tom!" But Tom opened one eye and then closed it, not so much as lifting his head.

A hawk came sailing over the yard, and the red rooster streaked it for



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shelter, hiding under the gooseberry bushes and calling in fright to the hens. Hawks made Noll naturally think of eagles and of a story that the school-master told once of an eagle's flying off with a child. Of course he was not a child now but a man full-fledged, with pants, but eagles are not pleasant to think of, for there's no telling what they'll do next.

"Anna!" called Noll, a little excited, going as close to the kitchen door as he dared. "Anna! There's a hawk out here after the chickens!" He listened hard for an answer and the hawk had gone far away.

"Anna! Anna! Say, Anna! Say, Anna! Come out here and get me a drink. Please, Anna! Please, Anna! Please!"

Not a word or a sign from the house.

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"Anna! Anna! Anna!" he shouted as hard and as fast as he could. What did he want now he wondered. What would he say when she smiled?

Still she did not come out, nor did she answer a word. Not a sound came from within, not a motion from the big gloomy house.

Noll was getting really frightened, he had to admit it to himself, as the cold wet feeling crept over him. Was the old bedroom fog getting out in the sunshine? And would it choke up the sun? He imagined the sun dimmer than it had been, and old Tom was moaning in his sleep. Noll sat down to think what to do. He knew now that Anna was being suffocated in the fog, was lying on her face in the darkness, and someone should go in and drag her out. He was the only man

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on the place. There are times when one might wish he were a woman. It is easier to run and scream and faint. But he, Noll, must go into that room. He must penetrate the suffocating fog as it wrapped its cold clammy arms around him. He could see Anna lying already on her face, her arms flung out like the woman in the picture in the Bible, and her long hair dripping with the waves. It was funny how the waves got in the old bedroom, but he didn't stop to think of that then.

He got up slowly and hunted for his courage. It certainly was not in his legs, for they wobbled like old grandfather Ryan's. His heart was beating hard and then stopping, and his skin was like a chicken's when dry plucked. But all the same he walked toward the kitchen. He opened the door and

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went in, shut his eyes and walked into the bedroom. How the dank fog met him as he entered! Cold drops formed on his face. His legs were steadier now. He would seize Anna's body and drag it out or else he would die there beside her.

He opened his eyes just a little in order to try to see where she lay, and then he opened them wider and wider, for the old bedroom was all light inside. It was a commonplace, ordinary storeroom now that Anna had opened the shutter, and there she was sorting potatoes, putting the bad ones into a pan.

She looked up curiously startled, and then impulsively stretched out her arms. Perhaps she saw something in his face. Anyway Noll ran up to her and gave way to a tempest of sobs.

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Even brave men cry sometimes when all's over. And Anna never smiled but understood him, and from that on they were very good friends.





XIV

THE best part of the day is the night-time. And the best part of the night is the day.

Noll reasoned this out with one shoe on, as he sat on the edge of the bed.

There is something very remarkable about the philosophy that comes from one shoe. There was my son John, for example, he of the funny old rhyme. It was Noll who was the first to discover that he and Revelation John

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were the same. He once composed a poem about it, which was probably something like this:

With one shoe off and one shoe on,
I sit and watch the gates of Heaven.
I see the hosts of ages gone
Move in by seventy times seven.
I see the crowns; I hear the psalms;
I catch the breath of waving palms—
All this I see like my son John,
With one shoe off and one shoe on.

The world is struggling for a place.
"Make haste!" all cry, "or you are
lost.
The work is hard—make haste! make
haste!
Reward for him who struggles most!"
They do not ask the reason why
They toil and fail, and fail and try.

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How can they when, with both shoes
on,
They will not sit with my son John?

But he and I sit pensively,
Not heeding all their words of warn-
ing.

Philosophers and poets, we,
We breathe the joys of early morn-
ing.

And though when Judgment Day at
last

Has closed the gate of Heaven fast,
And all are in, save us alone,
We are content for we have known
The meaning—I, and my son John,
With one shoe off and one shoe on.

He was not afraid to go to bed.
Brother Henry kept away the afraid.
It was then Noll most appreciated a

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brother. If he got a little nervous from thinking, he could dig elbows into Henry's short ribs. Then when Henry woke up and rolled over and Noll saw there wasn't any danger, he pretended to be fast asleep, breathed hard and held his mouth open. No, it was not because he was afraid. It was only that he wanted to enjoy life, and the best time to do it was the evening when grown folk are taking their leisure, and when children, or at least all good children, if sister Jane's judgment can be trusted, are sleeping and dreaming of the angels, though Noll always dreamed of something else.

In the old house things had been better, not so much according to rule. Noll went to sleep as was handy, sitting in the wood-box was a good way, close up to the shovel and tongs, Man Tongs

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and Mrs. Shovel Woman. Sometimes, too, father would trot him or snuggle him up on his lap. Father sang sleep songs when he trotted. Sermon songs were the best ones for that. Noll went to sleep on the first one, but wakened as soon as they stopped. If they tried to put him to bed he dug his eyes open with his fists, and vowed he was not sleepy at all. The end was the wood-box as usual with Man Tongs and Mrs. Shovel Woman.

But in the new house there came a new order. They had to live up to their position. Noll was put into his night-gown at dark and told to be a good child and not whimper—in short, to be an honor to the family. He liked the night-gown all right, though it did interfere with his stepping. He had to lift it up when he ran, not too

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high, for Jane said that was not proper. Sometimes when Jane was at the mirror rubbing goat's milk on her eyelashes to make them longer, he let propriety go to the winds, took his gown up neatly in his arms and chased around the table after Catharine. Yes, he quite loved the old night-gown with bare feet and bare legs sticking under.

But the bed was a different thing. Why a bed anyway, pray Heaven? with square yards of uninhabited cold linen and slippery pillows that swell up and bulge. Henry was in bed and sleeping stupidly, missing all the nice things of the house. Why should one take to cold linen when there are soft fuzzy rugs by the fire? Why a great slick bouncing square pillow when father's boots are smelling sweet with leather

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and all the dusty lanes they have tramped through? Besides, a pillow is apt to make one sleepy and the hard boots dig into the head. In that way they keep eyes partly open and nothing of importance is missed.

Old friends, too, came to visit them—Man Tongs and Mrs. Shovel Woman. Father's boots knew these people very well, and they had many a chat after bedtime.

"Come, Noll," his mother was saying. "Come, now, it is time to go to bed."

"Yes'm," said Noll, very obediently, but low so as not to attract any attention.

Mother went on with her advice to the neighbor, and our four friends planned for a festival, for the boots only counted as one.

"Let us sing," said Mrs. Shovel

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Woman, for she was very proud of her voice.

"Or dance!" said Man Tongs, squeakily limbering his legs at the joint.

"I say we tell stories," said Noll. "What do you want to do, father's boots?"

Father's boots suggested they do all three, and each one give a rhyme in addition.

"You begin," agreed the others at once.

So the boots began patting steps softly as they recited in concert these rhymes:

Said Shovel to Tongs, said Shovel to
Tongs,

"Come, you dance the hornpipe and I
will sing songs.

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Your waist is so short, and your legs
are so tall,
Be careful, step sidewise, or else you
will fall.
No doubt you feel proud, standing out
of the dirt,
But 'tis funny to think of the length of
your shirt."

"O Shovel," said Tongs. "O Shovel,"
said Tongs,
"With joy I'll dance hornpipes if you'll
sing the songs.
It is true, as you say, I am short in the
waist,
And you are much longer—too long
for my taste,
But if you must laugh at the length of
my shirt,
I can only reply 'tis as long as your
skirt."

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So Shovel and Tongs, so Shovel and
Tongs,
Made merry together with hornpipes
and songs.

"Capital! Capital!" cried Man Tongs
whose legs had been beating the time.

Mrs. Shovel Woman hummed the air
softly, sounding the notes low down
her long throat.

The neighbor got up to be going.

"Noll, Noll, I thought I told you to
go to bed," said his mother, speaking
in her company voice. "I think you
must be very sleepy."

"No, ma'am! No, thank you! I'm
not sleepy. I was closing my eyes so
as to see better."

He was so very polite before the
neighbor that his mother felt proud of
the example, and asked the neighbor

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to sit awhile longer. Politeness always pays. So remember.

"Now, Noll shall sing some verses!" cried the boots, wagging their tops in approval. "Noll is a poet and likes verses."

"I will hum an accompaniment," said Mrs. Shovel Woman, with modesty. "Though I have got a touch of bronchitis from that time Catharine left me out in the rain after getting my feet wet in her pie dough."

"Poor Catharine! She didn't do it on purpose," said Man Tongs, looking over to the settle where Catharine's black head was a-nodding. "She bent one of my legs in a mouse hole. I shall never dance quite the same again. But, pshaw! I don't blame her for that."

"She filled us up with milk though," said father's boots, somewhat com-

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plainly. "It was last summer when we stood behind the door and she thought we must be getting hungry. She poured in a little every morning. Of course it only soured on our stomachs and we came very near turning up our toes."

"A song! A song!" shouted Man Tongs. "Noll shall sing us a song of the boots, since Mrs. Shovel Woman and I have been celebrated."

So Noll put his arms around the boots and chanted softly so Man Tongs could dance, and Mrs. Shovel Woman struck *do, me, sol, do*.

Father's boots are dear to me,
Big boots, black boots,
With them I live merrily,
Dig boots, whack boots.
Now we stride o'er hill and dale,

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Now we play at ship and whale,
Now we step on pussy's tail,
Naughty father's boots.

Father's boots slip on my legs,
Deep boots, wide boots.
Then I walk as on two pegs,
Leap boots, stride boots.
Tops come up above my knees,
Come much higher if you please,
Oh, my gown is black with grease!
Dirty father's boots!

When I'm grown a man up big,
Tug boots, fight boots,
With a spectacle and wig,
Hug boots, tight boots,
I will take you into bed
When they call me sleepy-head,
And we'll sleep to beat the dead,
Dear old father's boots.

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The neighbor had gone away nodding wisely, saying it was exactly what she thought herself.

Mother was smiling over her knitting when she happened to look down at Noll.

"Noll! Noll! Is it possible that you have not gone to bed? Why, even Jane and Catharine have gone and brother Henry has been sleeping for an hour."

"I think my foot is getting worse," said Noll, looking at one foot carefully. "I was staying up to see if you could cure it."

"I will go and get the arnica," said his mother, "and then you must go off to bed."

"Just time for another song," said Mrs. Shovel Woman, all in a flutter. "I will sing a little song to Noll's toes."

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May they always walk him out of his trouble."

Then she began in her best form flirting out her skirt and making a bow at the moment she was taking high C.

Five sweet soldiers in a row,
At their head brave Captain Toe,
Next the sergeant in the ranks,
Stands up straight and plays no pranks.
Next the gallant corporal
Answers to his country's call.
Next the private crooks his knee,
Counting softly one, two, three.
Last of all the drummer boy,
Soldier's pride and soldier's joy.

"Glorious! Glorious!" cried Man Tongs, leaping up and striking his toeless feet together.

"Glorious! Glorious!" echoed the

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boots. "That thrills us clear down to our feet."

Mother came back with the arnica.

"Now hold up your foot and hold it still."

"I think it is this foot," he said, whimpering.

"Why, I see nothing at all! Father, you must put your boots in the closet. Noll has blackened himself from his head to his feet."

"I have to set the boots there to dry," said father, looking up from his sermon.

"Yes, yes, to dry," gasped Noll. "But perhaps they would dry better in the night-time if I put them at the head of my bed."

"How stupid you are!" exclaimed his mother. And then she began saying to father that she believed Noll was the dullest child they had.

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He found good time to pat them all good-night, and thank them for a very pleasant evening.

"Come, Noll, come!" said his mother. "Come, tell your father good-night."

"Good-night, father," running over. "Oh, please could I sit on your knee?"

"Run along, Noll, run to bed. Your mother is waiting. It is time."

"Please, please, just as we used to in the old house, and you'll sing me one little song."

So father took him up on his knee, and mother said, "You're spoiling the child." Then she sat down and folded her hands, for she, too, liked to hear father sing.

"What shall it be?" asked father, clearing his throat precisely like Mrs. Shovel Woman.

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“‘The Hog, the Hen and the Kangaroo.’”

So father began:

The hog, the hen and the kangaroo
Went out to sea on a summer's day,
The wind was fair and the sky was blue,
Sing hey day day ruddy; sing tol de
rol day.
Said the hog to the hen, “I am feeling
sick!
I want to go back, and I want it quick!”
But the hen sat and smiled at the kangaroo,
So what could the poor sick hoggie do?
A porpoise was blowing to cool his tail,
Sing hey day day ruddy; sing tol de
rol day.
The hen screamed and fainted—she
thought it a whale.

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Sing hey, sing hey, sing tol de rol
day.

She fell in the arms of the kangaroo,
So he became helpless as hoggie was,
too.

The sky was fair, but the strong wind
blew,
Sing hey, sing hey, sing tol de rol day.

The boat upset in the waters blue,
Sing hey, sing hey, sing tol de rol
day.

The hen wet her bonnet and spotted
her shoe,

The hog spoke in Latin, and what he
did say

Is not for me, and is not for you,
Sing hey day day ruddy; sing tol de
rol day.

We only remember the words of the
hen,

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"One never can trust in these horrid men."

So this is the moral. The story is told,
A story as old as the world is old.

"Sing the song of 'Sweet Lettice Gardiner,'" said Noll, for he knew that that was a long one.

Sweet Lettice Gardiner was a maid
You scarce can hope to see.
She dwelt in a cottage close beside
A brown brook, girt with margins wide
Of meadow's greenery.

And Lettice Gardiner sang as she spun,
As she wove she sang this song,
As she spread the linen white in the
sun,

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Where the grass was long and the
brook did run,
She sang through the whole day long:

*Oh, the open sea with its heaving tide
Is the only love for me,
I will lie on its breathing bosom wide.
The sea is my bridegroom, the sea is
my bride,
I will marry the open sea.*

The song she had learned from the
singing brook,
As it softly sang to the sky
Where it paused to mirror in stilly
nook,
The ocean's blue in its lover's look
And the ship clouds sailing by.

For the brook had no thought of a
river's care,

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Of mills to turn night and day,
Of the fret of wharves, and of wheels
that wear,
Of burdens to bear, and of strength to
bear
The ships to the sea away.

Nor did Lettice think of those lying still
In the unknown fathoms deep:
Of the wild winds working their wild
winds' will,
Of the waters that beat, and the waters
that kill,
While waiting women weep.

But her mother, often, shaking her
head,
Would beg for a homelier song—
A song of meadows and roses red,
Of lovers and maidens garlanded
In May-day troop and throng.

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But Lettice Gardiner still sang on,
The song that she loved to sing.
And spring passed over, and summer
was gone,
And autumn faded to winter wan,
And winter warmed to spring.

And the springtime brought her a lad
from the sea,
A sailor with sea blue eyes;
And his hand was warm, and his step
was free,
And his songs rang clear and tunefully,
In wave-wind harmonies.

And often, together, they sang her
song,
Together, and hand in hand;
And the willows that grew on the
banks along

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Sighed softly to think of their children's wrong,
And of peace that dwells on the land.

And her eyes were brown as the brook
was brown,

And his eyes were blue as the sea;
And as water flows from the brown
brook down,

Unheeding the bustle of mill or town,
But murmuring musically,

So the love light flowed from the
brown of her eyes

Into his eyes, blue with the deep
And the warm mists rising to sunset
skies

Were tintured with purple of paradise
And of dreams not dreamed in sleep.

And together they plighted their
solemn troth

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They would wed with the coming
year,
And the hands and the lips of the
lovers both
Were joined in compact, and eyes not
loth

Answered eyes with promising tear.

Then he went away to his sailing ship,
To the roaring Spanish Main;
And watching eye and quivering lip
Grew weary with many a season's slip,
For he never came back again.

He never came back, for his ship of
doom

Had sunk on the Rocks of Pride.
He never came back, for the bride had
come

To take in her cold arms the ruddy
groom.

The sea he had sung was his bride.

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And Lettice Gardiner's hair is white,
And her voice has lost its ring;
And her eyes are worn with weary sight
With watching by day and with weep-
ing by night,
But her firm lips still do sing:

*Oh, the open sea with its heaving tide
Is the only love for me,
I will lie on its breathing bosom wide.
The sea is my bridegroom, the sea is
my bride,
I will marry the open sea.*

Noll was sleeping before the song was begun, but father held on to him warmly, and mother reached out to touch his hand. Only some time after it was over did father lay him gently in the bed.

But the next morning Noll, on being

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questioned, stated solemnly that he had not been asleep. And at breakfast he announced to the family—and strange enough he actually believed it—that he had lain awake in bed there for hours, in fact did not sleep a wink all the night.





XV

SO THE fairy princess had her own way, or thought she had, which made her just as happy. It's about all any princess has, and they might as well be satisfied with thinking. Anyway Noll's family was grander and richer. It was curious the way it affected them, from father all the way down.

Sister Jane felt her riches the most. It even changed her manner of smiling; she now drew her mouth in at the

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corners precisely where it used to run out. Her nose, too, was always smelling something even when there was nothing to smell. It smelled most when she met the miller's daughter Julia. The miller owned but three acres and his mill, and he did all his work in the garden. Julia was a nice girl, of course, Jane always smiled when she met her, but that was the difference of the smiling—she drew in the corners of her mouth.

Father was changed next most by their money, but changed in a different way from Jane. Maybe that was because he was older, and Jane was but just growing up. Father's mouth stretched wider out than ever. It was hardly like a minister's mouth at all. His very ears took on a sort of smiling to carry out the stretching of his

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mouth. He smiled on all the beggars, and old soldiers, and on poor relatives, as well as on the rich. His smile always asked them in to dinner, and at the table it asked them to eat more. You ought to have heard cook scold in the kitchen. Even mother looked serious sometimes, but father kept on with his smiling.

Mother thought there should be some limit, since father was doing so much. She smiled now three afternoons a week, or when she put on her second best silk. Before they moved and when they were poor, she had worn a silk dress only on Sunday, but now that a new one had been purchased, she wore the old one three afternoons a week to keep up, she said, with her position. At other times she almost looked severe, and often she

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spoke in father's hearing of the thriftlessness and laziness of the poor.

As for Catharine, her riches didn't change her. She kept on the same as before. She played with Tim, the son of the miller, and shared her bread and jam with crippled Mike. She even stood on one foot out of pity, since one was all Mike had to stand on. Jane said Catharine was too big for such actions, and it was not proper to stand on one foot. Then Catharine cried like a thundershower that thunders even after it stops raining.

The relatives began to come in to pay father and mother long visits. The rich ones promised to come again, and the poor ones stayed at first coming. They made so much work for the cook that she was quite worn out with their eating. She said they were worse

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than the beggars, and that Noll's father would die in the poorhouse. The fairy princess must have been discouraged as she saw all her riches being eaten; perhaps she found someone to help her, for soon Aunt Conrad came down from the city, and she took such a liking to Noll that she offered to adopt him for always, and she said she would make him a real gentleman and give him a fortune in her will. Noll didn't know what a fortune was, nor a will, nor a gentleman, either, but he guessed it must be something nice from the way his mother drew in her breath. Perhaps they were all made of sugar, with gilt paper or something outside. He liked Aunt Conrad pretty well, though she did seem to be mostly satin. He was vexed with her a few days, however, for insisting that

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he must have his hair cut. She said that he looked like a rag-tag, and was a disgrace to his family and his station.

You see all the matter with his hair was that he had got a few burdock burs stuck in it. He and Jane and Catharine were playing when the burdock burs got themselves in. They had been making baskets and animals, swans and lions and everything. Noll could make only door-mats himself, they are so easy and flat. When they came to carry the animals they had not hands enough among them to go around. Jane put the big things in her apron, but the ram and the cow got their horns locked, and the rooster stuck his spurs into the camel so deep that they stayed in his side. Catharine filled her sunbonnet with the kitchen, but the washboard leg stuck to the baskets till

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the handle came off of the biggest, where, joined to the leg of the wash-board, it looked like a big letter K. This would not do at all, although it was funny to laugh at. So Noll was given the baskets to carry in his own separate hands. But what should he do with his door-mats when he had three fine ones all ready? It was plain there was but one thing to do, and that he did without thinking. He piled the three mats together and put them on top of his head. He had long curls then, soft and silken. That was before the time of the tags.

The mats looked so fine on his head that he pressed them down tight to make them firmer. Jane said they were exactly like a crown, and they played he was King Noll and knelt before him and asked for his majesty's

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bidding. All of this lasted on till supper time; and the animals and the kitchen they played store with, and purchased them one by one for the king. At supper he wore the crown in to show it; the prickles were sticking his forehead, but he had heard that crowned heads were uneasy, and took the prickles as part of the play. Still he must scratch them a little, though Aunt Conrad did say it was naughty for a gentleman to be scratching his head.

"What have you done?" said his mother, instead of saying, "What is your majesty's bidding?" as he had half expected she would. "Oh, your poor curls will be ruined."

She came toward him to take the crown off, but Noll put both his hands down tight on it, and pressed it in as hard as he could. Then began the cry-

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ing and the fussing and a terrible time with the scissors, and the comb, and father, and everything. It lasted till long after bed-time and Noll screamed and fought to the end. The scissors clipped close to his scalp, and from that time he had curls no longer, but wore his frayed hair in long tags that looked like a goose after plucking.

It was aunt Conrad that insisted and insisted, and finally Noll had to give in. It was the promise of six sweet-meats that did it, though Aunt Conrad thought it was love. It is a terrible thing to have hair cut. The big shears go shiver and scrunch. And something squeaks in the handle and the sharp points endanger the ears. There is nothing that makes one so nervous; it is a great deal worse than beheading, for that is over in a minute, but this

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keeps on an hour after, cutting and scrunching and squeaking. He was glad enough when it was done, and he had the six promised sweetmeats. Aunt Conrad called him her nice little gentleman, and he tasted of his finger to try himself and found it true he was sweeter than sugar.

After that came his table manners to consider, for Aunt Conrad said a gentleman could never eat as he did, cramming in pudding with both fists. The ways of a gentleman are peculiar, and senseless things become very important. Why should a gentleman use a knife, for example, that slips down his sleeve to his elbow and gouges him under the eye? Then a fork must be watched in the other hand, or Catharine is impaled as on a spit. It is very trying and confusing, and if an ordi-

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nary man would keep from starving he must get into the kitchen when all's over and feed himself as nature intended.

Yes, he would go with Aunt Conrad and be a little gentleman, as she asked him. He inquired first if she had a kitchen and she said she had, though not so big as this. He imagined it was richer, however, with the pots and the pans of pure gold, and while he was dreaming of this splendor there was something beautiful that happened that made him decide he would not be a gentleman and go off with Aunt Conrad at all. I suppose that the princess was disgusted, but this is the way it all came about.

It was Pat and his nest like the robin's, and the gnome people, too, I suspect. Anyway there it was one fine

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morning, and father Pat, proud as a king—a little pink baby in the bed with wrinkled face screwing up and twisting and little hands soft as pink snails. Noll patted the white blanket gently, and kissed mother Mary on the cheek. He was disappointed at finding only one of them, however, and went out to the woodpile where Pat was smoking and swelling up like a lord.

"I thought we'd have a nest full," he said, wisely, after they had been thinking some time.

Pat was a bit puzzled at first, and looked at Noll as if startled. "How's that?" he asked him at length.

"Why, you see the robins had four, and your house was bigger than theirs."

"Oh, that's it," said Pat, quite relieved. "Well, now you see it was this

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way," and then he smoked on in silence.

"Well?" asked Noll.

"You see it was this way," said Pat.

"Yes?" said Noll, very sober.

"Well, well, why, it's the custom—it's the custom, man, to have only one."

"Oh!" said Noll, very wisely, shaking his head as if he knew. "Oh, it is the custom—of course. But—but some day, perhaps, there'll be more."

And at this Pat looked prouder than ever.

Noll was thinking now of Aunt Conrad, and wondering how he could ever go away with this little baby here needing him, and Pat and Mary ignorant as cows as mother said that morning they were.

You may guess that some one was

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anxious as Noll sat with his chin in his hands, thinking enough to split his head.

It was long before he spoke out again, and then very solemnly and slowly.

"Will he grow up as big as me, Pat?" he said.

"Sure he will, Noll! Sure he will grow up as big. Only you will keep growing, too, so he never will be quite as big."

"And will you be his only father, and tell him everything to do?"

"Sure, only there'll be a godfather, and he will help me with advising."

"Will it be my father, the godfather?" asked Noll, a little mixed and breathless.

"Oh, he wouldn't have time," answered Pat. "I must get some one who isn't so grand."

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"The schoolmaster?"

"Oh, the schoolmaster is beyond the likes of me."

"Do you think I am grand enough?" he asked, wistfully. This seemed a turning place in his life.

"Noll, you're just the man I need," said father Pat, taking his hand.

"Then I couldn't go away and be a gentleman. I couldn't go with Aunt Conrad," very softly.

"No, you couldn't very well."

"I'll stay here and be godfather with you, and I'll help you with raising the baby."

"And then we'll be brothers," said Pat, proudly. "You and I, brothers together."

"Don't brothers sometimes kiss each other, Pat, when one of them is bigger than the other?"

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Pat caught him to his breast without a word. He knew what Noll was giving up, and how he had wanted and wanted to be a gentleman. As for the fairy princess who was watching, she flew away in disgust, and Noll lay crying very softly with Pat's breathing pressed up close to him.

We have come to a stop in the story; not the real stop, I am hoping, for the life of a poet is long and little Noll lived many years.

Some day, to-morrow, perhaps, we will take up the story again. I promise you plenty of adventure if ever that time comes to pass.

But not now, not to-night any more, for some little heads are a-nodding. Even big heads get tired sometimes,

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and now as I thumped my own gourd
one I heard a faint, dry, seedy rattle.

Good-night, and a kiss for the baby.
I am glad we can leave ours with Pat,
as he holds him up close in his arms.



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